

10¢ PER COPY SATURDAY JUNE 12 BY THE YEAR \$4.00

# ALL-STORY WEEKLY

IN THIS  
ISSUE

GOOD  
REFERENCES  
*Written for*

Constance Talmadge  
*by* E.J. Rath

THE FASTEST COMEDY IN FILM OR FICTION  
Screened by Joseph M. Schenck





Barbara E. Whitman - Monson, Mass.

# Mellin's Food Babies



Bobbie & Dickie King - Anderson, S.C.

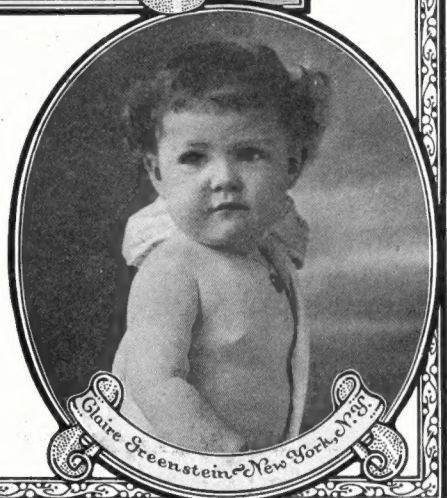
Send today for our instructive book,

"The Care and Feeding  
of Infants"

also a Free Trial Bottle of  
Mellin's Food

Mellin's Food Company,

Boston, Mass.



Claire Greenstein - New York, N.Y.





CUSTOMER:—

*No! I don't think I'll  
take that corset. It  
hasn't the Velvet Grip  
Hose Supporters.*

CORSETIÈRE:—

*We can easily change  
those for Velvet Grip  
"Sew-Ons"—put them  
on gladly for you.*

VELVET GRIP "Sew-Ons" can be attached to any corset—the easiest thing in the world to do. It is always well to have a set of them handy to replace the inferior hose supporters found on so many good corsets today.

The exclusive feature of the "Sew-Ons" is the All-Rubber Oblong Button found on all genuine

# Velvet Grip

## HOSE SUPPORTERS

LOOK FOR THE OBLONG RUBBER BUTTON—THE  
BUTTON THAT PREVENTS SLIPPING AND  
RUTHLESS RIPPING.

GEORGE FROST COMPANY, MAKERS, BOSTON.

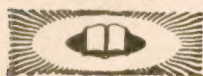
Also Makers of the famous Boston Garters for Men,  
Velvet Grip Pin-Ons for small Boys and Girls,  
The Baby Midget—Velvet Grip—for the "littlest one."



# ALL-STORY WEEKLY

VOLUME CXI

NUMBER 2



CONTENTS FOR JUNE 12, 1920



The entire contents of this magazine are protected by copyright, and must not be reprinted without the publishers' permission.

## FOUR CONTINUED STORIES

- Good References . . . . . E. J. Rath . . . . . 145  
A Five-Part Story — Part One
- The Frigate Bird . . . . . Lee Bolt . . . . . 174  
A Five-Part Story — Part Three
- House of the Hundred Lights . . . . J. U. Giesy and Junius B. Smith 220  
A Four-Part Story — Part Four
- Janie and the Waning Glories . . . . Raymond S. Spears . . . . 246  
A Six-Part Story — Part Five

## ONE NOVELETTE

- Cry Baby . . . . . John H. Blackwood . . . . 205

## SIX SHORT STORIES

- Teach: Pirate De Luxe . . . . . C. J. Cutcliffe Hyne . . . . 166  
IV—THE DESERT ISLE: (I) PORTRAIT OF MISS ARNCLIFFE
- Hats and Flowers . . . . . George Kerr O'Neill . . . . 195
- The Watcher at the Ford . . . . . L. Patrick Greene . . . . 240
- An Automatic Horse Trade . . . . . Strickland Gillilan . . . . 266
- Lucky Bird . . . . . John H. Hamlin . . . . 270
- Long Live Romance! . . . . . Robert Shannon . . . . 275

## VERSE

- A Quatrain . . . . . Helen Korte 165 | The Home-Coming . Edith Livingston Smith 269  
Sea Ballads . . . . . Gordon Malherbe Hillman 274

- Heart to Heart Talks . . . . . The Editor . . . . . 285

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, 280 BROADWAY, NEW YORK, and TEMPLE HOUSE, TEMPLE AVENUE, E. C., LONDON

FRANK A. MUNSEY, President

RICHARD H. TITHERINGTON, Secretary

CHRISTOPHER H. POPE, Treasurer

Single copies, 10 cents. By the year, \$4.00 in United States, its dependencies, Mexico and Cuba; \$6.00 to Canada, and \$7.00 to Foreign Countries. Remittances should be made by check, express money order or postal money order. Currency should not be sent unless registered

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY. COPYRIGHT, 1920

Entered as second class matter May 17, 1915, at the Post-Office at New York, under the Act of March 3, 1879





**FREE**  
**For 10 Days Wear**

## Put It Beside a Diamond



**1 Flat Belcher Ring**  
Solid gold mounting, with wide flat band. Almost a carat, guaranteed genuine Tifnite Gem. Price \$16.50; only \$4.50 upon arrival. Balance \$3 per month.



**2 Ladies' Ring**  
Solid gold mounting. Has a guaranteed genuine Tifnite Gem almost a carat in size. Price \$16.50; only \$4.50 upon arrival. Balance \$3.00 a month.



**3 Tooth Belcher Ring**  
Solid gold six-prong tooth mounting. Guaranteed genuine Tifnite Gem, almost a carat in size. Price \$16.50; only \$4.50 upon arrival. Balance \$3 per month.

To quickly introduce into every locality our beautiful TIFNITE GEMS, we will absolutely and positively send them out FREE and on trial for 10 days' wear. You simply pay only \$4.50 on arrival, balance \$3.00 per month if satisfactory. In appearance and by every test, these wonderful gems are so much like a diamond that even an expert can hardly tell the difference. But only 10,000 will be shipped on this plan. To take advantage of it, you must act quickly.

### Solid Gold Mountings

some solid gold mounting—after you have carefully made an examination and decided that you have a wonderful bargain and want to keep it, you can pay for it in such small payments that you'll hardly miss the money. If you can tell a TIFNITE GEM from a genuine diamond, or if, for any reason at all, you do not wish to keep it, return it at our expense.

Send the coupon NOW! Send no money. Tell us which ring you prefer. We'll send it at once. After you see the beautiful, dazzling gem and the hand-

## Remarkable Gem Discovery

The closest thing to a diamond ever discovered. In appearance a TIFNITE and a diamond are as alike as two peas. TIFNITE GEMS have the wonderful pure white color of diamonds of the first water, the dazzling fire, brilliancy, cut and polish. Stand every diamond test—fire, acid and diamond file. Mountings are exclusively fashioned in latest designs—and guaranteed solid gold.

### Send No Money

Just send coupon. Send no reference, no money, no obligation to you in any way! You run no risk. The coupon brings you any of the exquisitely beautiful rings shown and described here for 10 days' wear free. Be sure to enclose strip of paper showing exact finger measurement as explained.

### Mail This Coupon

Send now and get a TIFNITE GEM on this liberal offer. Wear it for 10 days on trial. Every one set in latest style Solid gold mountings. Decide then whether you want to keep it or not. Send for yours now—today—sure. Send no money.

**The Tifnite Gem Co.**  
109 East 39th St.  
Dept. 779 Chicago, Ill.

**How to Order Rings** To get the right size ring, cut a strip of heavy paper so that the ends exactly meet when drawn tightly around the second joint of finger on which you want to wear the ring. Be careful that the measuring paper fits snugly without overlapping, and measure at the second joint. Send the strip of paper to us with order coupon.

### Mail This Coupon

**THE TIFNITE GEM CO.**

109 East 39th St., Dept. 779, Chicago, Ill.

Send me Ring No. .... on 10 days' approval. (In ordering ring, be sure to enclose size as described above.)

I agree to pay \$4.50 on arrival, and balance at the rate of \$3.00 per month. If not satisfactory, I will return same within ten days at your expense.

Name.....

Address.....





# Classified Advertising

## The Purpose of this Department

is to put the reader in touch immediately with the newest needfuls for the home, office, farm, or person; to offer, or seek, an unusual business opportunity, or to suggest a service that may be performed satisfactorily through correspondence. It will pay a housewife or business man equally well to read these advertisements carefully.

## Classified Advertising

### Rates in the Munsey Magazines:

	Line Rate	Combination Line Rate
Munsey's Magazine	\$1.50	\$4.00
THE ARGOSY COMB'N		Less 2% cash discount
The Argosy	2.50	
All-Story Weekly		
Minimum space four lines.		

July 17th Argosy Combination Forms Close June 19th.

## AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

**Extraordinary Opportunity** is offered ambitious men to become distributors for new product now being marketed. No competition; demand everywhere. Exclusive sales rights given. Complete sales helps and full co-operation assures success. Start small and grow. \$1000 automobile given free. Opportunity to establish large business netting \$10,000 yearly. Act immediately. Garfield Mfg. Co., Dept. A, Garfield Building, Brooklyn, N. Y.

**SELL SOFT DRINKS**—Make \$10 to \$50 a day. Just add cold water to our soft drink preparations and you have the most delicious drinks you ever tasted. Ten kinds, Orangeade, Grape-Julep, Cherry-Julep, etc. Thirty big glasses, 25c, enough for 200 for \$1. Eighty-five cents clear profit on every dollar selling these delicious drinks by the glass at ball games, fairs, dances, picnics, etc. Big money selling the small packages to families, stores, etc. Send 10c for enough for 10 large glasses and particulars postpaid. Morrissey Company, A 4417-20 Madison St., Chicago.

**DO YOU want to earn \$3,000 to \$5,000 a year?** You can do it easily. See Anderson Steam Vulcanizer Display Ad in this issue.

**AGENTS: \$100 WEEKLY** possible introducing new winter automobile fuel. Specially adapted to cold weather. Starts easy. Adds power, mileage and reduces operating expense. Endorsed by thousands. Territory going like wildfire. Act quick. \$28 sample outfit free. L. Ballvey, Dept. 2, Louisville, Ky.

**SELL What Millions Want.** New, wonderful Liberty Portraits. Creates tremendous interest. Absolutely different; unique; enormous demand—30 hours' service. Liberal credit. Outfit and catalogue free. \$100 weekly profit easy. Consolidated Portrait Co., Dept. 22, 1036 W. Adams Street, Chicago.

**WE START YOU IN BUSINESS,** furnishing everything. Men and women. \$30.00 to \$100.00 weekly operating our "New System Specialty Candy Factories" anywhere. Opportunity lifetime; booklet free. Ragsdale Co., Drawer 93, East Orange, N. J.

**SEND 2c POSTAGE** for free sample with particulars. No splashing water strainers. Easy seller. Returns big. Experience unnecessary. Seed Filter Co., N 73 Franklin St., New York.

**Mexican Diamonds** flash like genuine, fool experts, stand tests, yet sell for 1-50th the price. Few live Agents wanted to sell from handsome sample case. Big profits, pleasant work. Write today. Mexican Diamond Imp't. Co., Box 88, Las Cruces, N. Mexico.

**PANTS \$1.00, SUIT \$3.75, MADE TO MEASURE.** For even a better offer than this write and ask for free samples and new styles. Knickerbocker Tailoring Co., Dept. 540, Chicago, Ill.

**Insyde Tyres—Inner Armor for Auto Tyres.** Doubles mileage, prevents 90% of all punctures and blowouts. Thousands in use. Tremendous demand. Big sales. Liberal profits. Details free. American Automobile Accessories Co., Dept. 165, Cincinnati, O.

**AGENTS \$40 A WEEK SELLING GUARANTEED HOSIERY,** for men, women and children. Must wear twelve months or replaced free. Agents having wonderful success. Thomas Mfg. Co., 2207 North Street, Dayton, Ohio.

**AGENTS—OUR SOAP AND TOILET ARTICLE PLAN IS A WONDER.** Get our Free Sample Case Offer. Ho-Bo-Co, 137 Locust, St. Louis, Mo.

**SELL TIRES DIRECT TO CAR OWNER.** 30x3 non-skid, \$11.75. Tubes \$2.25; other sizes in proportion. Guaranteed 8,000 miles on liberal adjustment basis. Big commissions paid weekly. Experience or capital unnecessary. Auto Tire Clearing House, 1531 West 15th, Chicago.

**AGENTS—\$40 TO \$100 A WEEK.** Free Samples. Gold and silver Sign Letters for stores and office windows. Anyone can put them on. Big demand. Liberal offer to general agents. Metallic Letter Co., 431-H, N. Clark, Chicago.

## MICHIGAN FARM LANDS FOR SALE

**LAND! LAND!** Make big money in Michigan's best hard-wood counties. No swamps or stones. 10 to 160 acres, at \$15 to \$35 per acre. Small down payment, easy terms on balance. Good roads to near-by railroad, towns, schools, churches, etc. Over twenty years' experience in helping settlers. Warranty Deed and Abstract of Title with every purchase. Swigart Land Co., Y1245 First Natl. Bk. Bldg., Chicago, Ill.

## AGENTS & SALESMEN WANTED

**BIGGEST MONEY-MAKER IN AMERICA.** I want 100 men and women quick to take orders for raincoats, raincoats and waterproof aprons. Thousands of orders waiting for you. \$2.00 an hour for spare time. McDonough made \$813.00 in one month, Nissen \$19.00 in three hours; Purviance \$207.00 in seven days. \$5,000 a year profit for eight average orders a day. No delivering or collecting. Beautiful coat free. No experience or capital required. Write quick for information. Comer Mfg. Co., Dept. Y126, Dayton, Ohio.

**SALESMEN—CITY OR TRAVELING.** Experience unnecessary. Send for list of lines and full particulars. Prepare in spare time to earn the big salaries—\$2,500 to \$10,000 a year. Employment services rendered Members. National Salesmen's Training Association, Dept. 133-G, Chicago, Ill.

**\$10 WORTH OF FINEST TOILET SOAPS,** perfumes, toilet waters, spices, etc., absolutely free to agents on our refund plan. Lacassian Co., Dept. 614, St. Louis, Mo.

**AGENTS: SELL NEVERFAIL IRON RUST AND STAIN REMOVER. HUGE PROFITS. BIG LINE. SAMPLE.** Write today. Sanford-Beal Co., Inc., Dept. A, Newark, N. Y.

**WOULD YOU LIKE TO WEAR A BEAUTIFUL NEW SUIT** made to your own measure Free, and make \$35 to \$50 every week? You can be the best dressed man in your town and earn a lot of extra money if you write at once for our beautiful samples and wonderful offer. The Progress Tailoring Co., Dept. 285, Chicago.

**AGENTS—We offer you \$8 a day** selling new Concentrated Soft Drinks; great summer hit; 30c bottle makes 32 glasses; all flavors; just add water; lightning seller; small package; carry in pocket; outfit furnished free; send postal today. American Products Co., 2424 American Bldg., Cincinnati, Ohio.

**SALESMEN—Side or Main Line** to sell low priced 6,000 mile guaranteed tires; 30x3½ non-skid sells for \$13.95; other sizes in proportion. Good money-making proposition for live wires. Master Tire Co., 618 So. Michigan, Chicago.

**AGENTS: WIRELESS UMBRELLA.** I am paying \$2 an hour, taking orders for this newest invention. Send for 5-part outfit. Six-inch, midget, demonstrator free. Parker Mfg. Company, 306 Dike Street, Dayton, Ohio.

**AGENTS—YOU CAN GET A BEAUTIFUL FAST COLOR ALL WOOL "MADE-TO-MEASURE" SUIT** without a cent of expense. Write Lincoln Woollen Mills Company, Dept. 25, Chicago, Ill., for their liberal suit offer.

**SALES AGENTS WANTED IN EVERY COUNTY TO GIVE ALL OR SPARE TIME.** Position worth \$750 to \$1500 yearly. We train the inexperienced. Novelty Cutlery Co., 77 Bar Street, Canton, Ohio.

**DO YOU WANT AGENTS AND SALESMEN** to sell your merchandise? Men and women who are educated in personal salesmanship and know the house-to-house, office, and store canvassing proposition. These advertisers are getting them year in and year out, and there are thousands more for you among the 5,000,000 readers of The Munsey Magazines. Our Classified Service Bureau will gladly show you how to use this section most profitably and at the least cost. Write to-day to the Classified Manager, The Argosy Combination, 280 B'way, N. Y.

## HELP WANTED

**RAILWAY TRAFFIC INSPECTORS EARN FROM \$110 TO \$200** per month and expenses. Travel if desired. Unlimited advancement. No age limit. We train you. Positions furnished under guarantee. Write for Booklet CM 30. Standard Business Training Institute, Buffalo, N. Y.

**WRITE NEWS ITEMS AND SHORT STORIES** for pay in spare time. Copyright book and plans free. Press Reporting Syndicate, 433, St. Louis, Mo.

**MEN—AGE 17 TO 45. EXPERIENCE UNNECESSARY.** Travel; make secret investigations, reports. Salaries; expenses. American Foreign Detective Agency, 320, St. Louis, Mo.

Classified Advertising continued on page 6.



# All Musical Instruments

With Complete Outfits

## Free Trial

**A New Plan.** Wurlitzer will send you any musical instrument you wish for, of the finest quality, with a complete outfit of everything you need, for a full week's trial in your own home. No obligation to buy. If you decide to keep it pay in small monthly sums. Wurlitzer makes complete outfits cost little more than instrument alone.

Outfits include handsome carrying case, velvet and plush lined; self instructor, instruction aids; all attachments and extra parts, books of musical selections, etc.

Wurlitzer plan gives you everything you need at once, on free trial and on easy payments, and at a tremendous saving. Wurlitzer is the largest musical firm in the world today. Wurlitzer musical instruments are standard of the world. Buy the Wurlitzer way. Send for the instrument you wish on trial and judge for yourself.

### Convenient Monthly Payments

A few cents a day will pay for your instrument. These Complete Outfits are ready. Send for yours on free trial.

Violin	Flute	Banjo-Ukelele
Cornet	Eupho	Banjo-Guitar
Saxophone	Erie	Ukelele
Trombone	Guitar	Hawaiian-Guitar
Mellophone	Mandolin	Viola
Trap Drum	Tenor Banjo	Cello
Clarinet	Banjo-Mandolin	
Piccolo		

### Beautiful New Catalog Free Write For It Today

Full details of all instruments and outfits and details of free trial and easy payment offer. Illustrated in color. More pictures and more information about musical instruments than in any other book published. No obligation. Send for the catalog today.

**The Rudolph Wurlitzer Co., Dept. A107**  
117 E. 4th St., Cincinnati 329 S. Wabash Ave., Chicago

**The Rudolph Wurlitzer Co., Dept. A107**  
117 E. 4th St., Cincinnati — 329 S. Wabash Ave., Chicago

Send me your new catalog with illustrations in color and full description of the Wurlitzer Complete Outfits and details of the free trial and easy payment offer.

Name .....

Address .....

(Musical instrument in which I am especially interested)



Reg. U.S. Pat. Off.  
**WURLITZER**  
200 YEARS OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENT MAKING



Classified Advertising continued from page 4.

## Are YOU a Man or a Mannikin?



**STRONGFORT**  
The Perfect Man

A man's happiness largely depends on his Vital Powers; his success in social, domestic and business life all centres around this. If he is not virile, he is not magnetic, forceful or attractive; neither is he sought after—his very strength is the axis upon which all else relating to him revolves. Men become weak through overwork, worry, and bad habits, and gradually lose their strength and manhood. When they reach the stage when they find their strength on the wane, it is the forerunner of failure, and domestic happiness is then soon upset. Young men become incapable of marriage, listless and purposeless; their brain power decreases as their manhood fails. Strongfortism so strengthens the internal muscles, which are responsible for general health and physical strength, and the most obstinate and long standing cases give way, in a short time, to its internal action.

### MAKE A MAN OUT OF YOURSELF

The only way to do it is to build up your body—all of it—through Nature's methods; NOT by pampering your poor stomach and giving it extra work to do. Don't be a pill-feeder. And don't think fate is making you a failure. The real REASON why you don't succeed doubtless lies in your poor, emaciated body, in your half sickly condition, which shows in your face and your unhealthy skin. The world has no use for weak, sickly people; nobody wants to have them around.

### BUILD UP YOUR BODY

You can do it, if you will only WILL to do it, and go about it in Nature's way. You can make your figure manly and symmetrical and at the same time strengthen your heart, lungs, stomach and every other vital organ, by developing the INTERNAL muscles on which their action depends, as well as your external muscles. You can free yourself from Constipation, Indigestion, Dyspepsia, Biliousness, or any other chronic ailment that is handicapping you and holding you back. WHEN YOU HAVE NATURE ON YOUR SIDE, Get back your health, strength and a big store of reserve vitality, by taking advantage of the tremendous revitalizing power which Nature has implanted in every human organism.

### STRONGFORTISM

The principles of Strongfortism are based upon my discovery—that internal muscular activity governs Health, Strength and Life itself. Most forms of disease are caused from the muscles losing their power of rapid contraction. As these muscles are responsible for holding the internal organs in position, when they are relaxed, the organs gradually fall out of their place and rest upon other organs, upsetting their functioning and causing almost every known form of disease.

What I have done for thousands of other weak, ailing, discouraged men and women, I can do for YOU.

### SEND FOR MY FREE BOOK

"Promotion and Conservation of Health, Strength and Mental Energy" will PROVE to you that STRONGFORTISM can and will do for YOU what it has done and is doing every day for other men and women who have TURNED TO NATURE for the restoration of their lost vitality. Remember there's no medicine of any kind in Strongfortism; no expensive apparatus required; no interference with your business, work or occupation. Fifteen or twenty minutes daily in the privacy of your own bedroom will work wonders for you.

BE HEALTHY—STRONG—VITAL—THAT'S LIVING! Send for the book NOW—don't put off doing so. IT'S FREE, but it's worth good money to any man or woman in ANY state of health. Fill out the coupon below and enclose it with three 2c stamps to cover packing and postage and I will mail you with the book a special letter on the subject in which you are most interested.

**LIONEL STRONGFORT** Physical and Health Specialist

1326 Strongfort Institute Newark, N. J.

— CUT OUT AND MAIL THIS COUPON —

Mr. Lionel Strongfort, Newark, N. J.

Dear Strongfort: Please send me your book, "Promotion and Conservation of Health, Strength and Mental Energy," for postage of which I enclose three 2c stamps to cover mailing expenses. I have marked X before the subject in which I am interested.

.... Colds	.... Insomnia	.... Weak Eyes
.... Catarrh	.... Short Wind	.... Falling Hair
.... Asthma	.... Flat Feet	.... Gastritis
.... Hay Fever	.... Stomach Disorders	.... Heartweakness
.... Obesity	.... Constipation	.... Poor Circulation
.... Headache	.... Biliousness	.... Skin Disorders
.... Thinness	.... Torpid Liver	.... Despondency
.... Rupture	.... Indigestion	.... Round Shoulders
.... Lumbago	.... Nervousness	.... Lung Troubles
.... Neuritis	.... Poor Memory	.... Increased Height
.... Neuralgia	.... Rheumatism	.... Stoop Shoulders
.... Flat Chest	.... Bad Habits	.... Muscular Development
.... Deformity (describe)	.... Weaknesses	

NAME.....  
AGE..... OCCUPATION.....  
STREET.....  
CITY..... STATE.....

## AUTHORS—MANUSCRIPTS

**FREE TO WRITERS**—a wonderful little book of money-making hints, suggestions, ideas: the A B C of successful Story and Movie-Play writing. Absolutely free. Send for your copy now! Just address Authors' Press, Dept. 19, Auburn, N. Y.

**STORIES, POEMS, PLAYS, ETC.**, are wanted for publication. Good ideas bring big money. Submit Mss. or write Literary Bureau, 116, Hannibal, Mo.

**WANTED**—Poems for publication for magazine of Inspiration and Practical Help to young writers. Send Mss. to the Poet's Magazine, Room 101, 916 S. Michigan Avenue, Chicago.

**WRITERS: HAVE YOU A POEM, STORY OR PHOTOPLAY TO SELL?** Submit MSS. at once to Music Sales Company, Dept. 60, St. Louis, Mo.

## AUTOMOBILE SCHOOLS

**BE AN AUTO OR TRACTOR EXPERT.** Unlimited opportunity for civil and Government Work. 5000 successful graduates. Write at once for our big free catalog. Cleveland Auto School, 1819 E. 24th Street, Cleveland, Ohio.

## MOTION PICTURE PLAYS

**PHOTOPLAYS WANTED BY 48 COMPANIES: \$10 TO \$500** each paid for plays. No correspondence course or experience needed; details sent free to beginners. Sell your ideas. Producers League, 388 Wainwright, St. Louis, Mo.

## PATENT ATTORNEYS

**PATENTS**—Write for Free Illustrated Guide Book and Evidence of Conception Blank. Send model or sketch and description for our opinion of its patentable nature. Free. Highest References. Prompt Attention. Reasonable Terms. Victor J. Evans & Co., 762 Ninth, Washington, D. C.

**PATENTS.** If you have an invention write for our Guide Book, "How To Get A Patent." Send model or sketch and description, and we will give our opinion as to its patentable nature. Randolph & Co., 630 F, Washington, D. C.

**PATENTS. BOOKLET FREE. HIGHEST REFERENCES. BEST RESULTS.** Promptness assured. Send drawing or model for examination and opinion as to patentability. Watson E. Coleman, 624 F Street, Washington, D. C.

**PATENTS PROCURED—TRADE MARKS REGISTERED**—A comprehensive, experienced, prompt service for the protection and development of your ideas. Preliminary advice gladly furnished without charge. Booklet of information and form for disclosing idea free on request. Richard B. Owen, 68 Owen Bldg., Washington, D. C., or 2278J Woolworth Bldg., New York.

YOU read these little advertisements. Perhaps you obtain through them things you want; things you might never have known about if you had not looked here. Did it ever strike you other people would read your message—that they would buy what you have to sell; whether it is a bicycle you no longer need, a patented novelty you desire to push, or maybe your own services? Our Classified Service Bureau will gladly show you how to use this section most profitably and at the least cost. Write to-day to the Classified Manager, The Argosy Combination, 280 Broadway, New York.

## STAMMERING

**ST-STU-T-T-TERING AND STAMMERING** cured at home. Instructive booklet free. Walter McDonnell, 148 Potomac Bank Building, Washington, D. C.

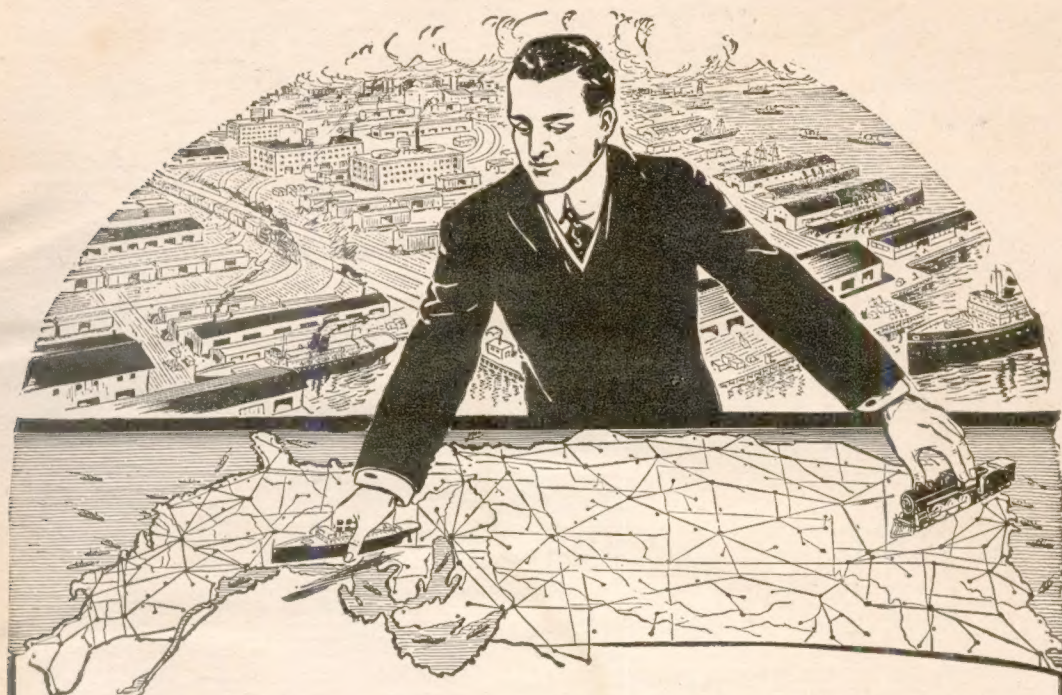
## TYPEWRITERS

**NEW, REBUILT AND SLIGHTLY USED TYPEWRITERS** \$8 up. Portable machines \$10 up. Write for our Catalog 260F. Beran Typewriter Co., 58 W. Washington St., Chicago.

## WANTED TO BUY

**CASH FOR OLD FALSE TEETH.** We pay up to \$35.00 per set (broken or not). Also buy discarded gold jewelry, gold crowns, bridges, platinum, diamonds, watches and silver, gold or silver ore or nuggets. Send now. Cash by return mail. Package held free to ten days for sender's approval of our offer. United States Smelting Works, Dept. 26, Chicago, Ill.





## This Man Earns \$100 a Week

He knows how to open up large markets and help his employers outstrip competition in business because he knows how to route shipments, obtain shortest mileage, lowest rates, and quickest deliveries. He knows how to classify goods and reduce transportation costs. His knowledge of traffic laws and transportation saves his employers thousands of dollars annually.

Here's your chance to qualify for the same kind of a position at the same salary. Don't let this chance go by. Few men have this traf-

fic knowledge. The demand far exceeds the supply. In fact, over half a million firms need men who can classify commodities and secure ratings most economically. You can be able to answer this call for trained traffic men quickly by means of the LaSalle Home Study Course. We guide you step by step. With the LaSalle Extension University behind you, you can qualify in a comparatively short time. The expense is so small and the terms so easy you will scarcely miss the money. Start now to qualify for a bigger job—at home—in spare time.

## Traffic Managers

### Earn \$35 to \$100 a Week

There seems to be no limit to the salaries expert traffic men are paid. Some concerns pay their directors of traffic \$10,000 or more a year. Salaries of \$35 to \$100 a week are commonly paid to traffic managers. Splendid positions with high salaries for competent, trained men are open everywhere.

### We Train You By Mail For a Big Traffic Job

You need not leave your present position. You may keep on earning while learning.

Our course is recommended and endorsed by railroad executives and big business concerns throughout the country. Your training is under the supervision of a large corps of traffic experts among the most prominent in the country, headed by N. D. Chapin, until his present connection with us, Chief of Tariff

Bureau New York Central Lines. The course gives you also a thorough understanding of Interstate Commerce Laws and prepares you for every duty required of a high grade traffic manager—how to route shipments, obtain shortest mileage, classify goods, secure quickest deliveries and lowest rates—in fact, trains you so that you can qualify for an immediate high salaried railroad or industrial traffic position.

**LaSalle Extension University,**  
"The Largest Business Training Institution in the World"  
Dept. 632-T Chicago, Ill.

### Send In the Coupon

Convince yourself that our graduates, because of their thorough training through our course, qualify for the best positions and increase their earning capacity. Let us send you letters from students and full details concerning the LaSalle University Home Course in Traffic Management. Send in the coupon now and receive our free book "Proof," letters and full details by return mail.

### Free Book Coupon

**LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY**  
Dept. 632-T Chicago, Illinois  
"The Largest Business Training Institution in the World"

Send Free Book about opportunities now open to TRAFFIC EXPERTS with LaSalle University Training. It is understood that I am not obligating myself in any way.

Name.....

Position.....

Address.....



# Don't Send a Penny

Just send the coupon stating size and width—that's all. We want you to see these shoes at our risk. Examine them, try them on—and then decide as to whether or not you wish to keep them. Our special bargain price is only **\$4.69** per pair while they last. Season's greatest bargain. We send them to you, not a cent in advance. so that you can compare them with any \$7 or \$8 shoes. If you don't think this the biggest shoe bargain you can get anywhere, send the shoes back at our expense. You won't be out a cent.

## Only One Pair to a Customer At This Low Price

We can't foretell future prices of material and labor. Times are too uncertain. Therefore all we can tell you **NOW** is that we can guarantee you a pair of these elegant latest style shoes at this remarkably low price provided you send us your order at once. And at this price of only **\$4.69** we can send only one pair to a customer.

### Stylish and Durable

Made of genuine leather in gun metal, popular Manhattan toe last. Blucher style. Comfortable, substantial, long wearing, genuine oak leather soles—reinforced shank and cap. Military heel. Best expert workmanship. Black only. Sizes 6 to 11.

## Send Coupon

Sign and mail this coupon. No money now. Wait until they come. We ship them at once. Keep them **only** if satisfactory in every way. Be sure to give size and width. Send now while sale is on. Send no money.

**Leonard-Morton & Co.**  
Dept. 6425 Chicago, Illinois



Pay  
Only  
**\$4.69**

for shoes on arrival. If on examination you do not find them the greatest shoe bargain return them and back goes your money. No obligation, no risk to you. But send at once to be sure of getting them. A sale like this soon sells the stock.

**Order by No. A15105**

### Leonard-Morton & Co.

Dept. 6425 Chicago, Illinois

Send the Men's Dress shoes No. A15105. I will pay **\$4.69** for shoes on arrival, and examine them carefully. If I am not satisfied, will send them back and you will refund my money.

Size..... Width.....

Name.....

Address.....

Town..... State.....



# ALL-STORY WEEKLY

VOL. CXI

NUMBER 2



SATURDAY, JUNE 12, 1920



## Good References

By E. J. Rath

Author of "Elope If You Must," "Once Again," "Too Much Efficiency," etc.

REAL humor in fiction is a good deal like radium, a powerful force but most annoyingly rare; also, like the mineral, there are only a few (comparatively) sources of supply. The author of the following story is not only one of the most prolific of these sources, but the supply that flows from his pen is as pure in quality as it comes. All who have read "A Good Indian," "When the Devil Was Sick," "Too Many Crooks," or any of the other E. J. Rath serials will, we think, admit this without question, so we will only say of this present story that it is in every way up to the author's high standard.

### CHAPTER I.

#### MARY DECIDES.

THERE was only one man in the office of the Brain Workers' Exchange and he was an obscurity who "kept" the books in the farthest corner of the room. Girls of various ages and women of all ages crowded him remorselessly out of the picture, so that when it was possible to obtain even a glimpse of him he served merely as a memorandum of the fact that there are, after all, two sexes. A few of the girls and women sat at desks; they were the working staff of the Exchange. One of them was also the owner and manager.

Outside a railing that divided the room there were a few chairs, very few, because it was not the policy of the Exchange to maintain a waiting-room for clients. It was

a quiet and brisk clearing house, not a loitering place nor a shop-window for the display of people who had brains to sell by the week or the month. The clients came and went rather rapidly; they were not encouraged to linger. Sometimes they were sent for, and after those occasions they usually disappeared from the "active-list" and became inconsequential incidents in the history of the Exchange. The Exchange had pride in the fact that it made quick turnovers of its stock; nothing remained very long on the shelves. And in times such as these there were no bargain sales in brains.

Mary Wayne paused for a second on the threshold as her eyes swiftly reviewed the details of the picture; then she closed the door gently behind her, conscious of a distinct feeling of encouragement. She had



been apprehensive; she had faced an expected sense of humiliation. There had been in her mind an idea that she was about to become one of a clamorous crowd. But things were very much otherwise in the Brain Workers' Exchange—gratefully so.

She walked over to a desk, where a small brass sign said "Registry," sensing that this must be her first port of call. A young woman who sat at the desk glanced up, saw a stranger, reached for a form-card that lay on top of a neatly stacked pile and dipped a pen.

"Name, please," she said.

"Mary Wayne."

"Address?"

The address was given; it was that of a boarding-house in the Eighties, but Mary Wayne hoped that it would not be so identified in the mind of the recording angel, if, indeed, she should prove to be such.

"Married?"

"Oh, no," hastily. It seemed an absurd question, but the answer went down in a place left blank by the printer.

"Age?"

"Twenty-two."

"Occupation?"

"Stenographer." The answer had a faint note of defiance.

"Expert? We handle only experts, you know."

"Expert," said Mary Wayne.

There were other questions. Had she a knowledge of office management? No. Of bookkeeping? No. Of foreign languages? She knew French; a little Spanish. Did she understand filing systems? She thought so. Education? There had been two years in college; necessity compelled her to give up the remainder.

The woman behind the desk surveyed her from hat to shoes in a rapid, impersonal glance, then wrote something in another blank space. Mary wildly yearned to know what it was, but checked the impulse to lean forward and see.

"Now, your references, please."

"I have no references."

There was a sudden chill in the manner of the recording angel. She pushed the form-card away from her, so that it teetered perilously on the edge of the desk. If it

passed the brink there was nothing to save it from the waste-basket below.

"All registrants must furnish references. Perhaps you did not observe the sign on the wall."

Mary had not seen it, but she now looked at it, apologetically.

"I didn't know," she said. "I'm sorry. But I can explain very easily."

"We never deviate from our rule, Miss Wayne. We have our reputation to sustain. References are absolutely essential."

"But don't you see—"

"It would only waste your time and mine. We recommend no person for employment unless she can furnish at least two references. We even require employers to furnish them, unless they are known to us."

The recording angel was no longer angelic. She was polite, perhaps, yet peremptory. With a little gesture of finality, she tipped the card into the waste-basket. Mary caught her breath, almost desperately. References! Oh, she had heard that word before. A dozen times it had risen to mock her, like a grinning specter.

If asked to spell it, she felt that she would write it thus:

"D-o-o-m."

"But, please—*please*, let me explain about the references."

"Sorry. It would be quite useless."

"I can assure you I'm absolutely—all right," pleaded Mary. "I'm really a good stenographer—an expert. I'm honest, and—"

She paused in the humiliation of having to say things that ought to be obvious to anybody.

But the woman simply shook her head.

"You must listen; oh, surely you will. I suppose I should have explained in the beginning, but it didn't seem necessary. I didn't understand. This is the first time I was ever in—in—an intelligence office."

The recording angel stiffened in her uncompromising desk-chair, and Mary instantly knew she had given unpardonable offense.

"This is *not* an intelligence office, Miss Wayne. An intelligence office is a place for cooks, chambermaids, waitresses, laundresses, chauffeurs, gardeners, and stable-



hands. This is an exchange which deals in brains only, plus experience and good character. It is not even an employment agency. Good day, Miss Wayne."

Mary recoiled from the desk, numbed. She had sealed her own fate in two blundering words. She had not meant to say "intelligence office"; it slipped out in an evil moment of inadvertence. It was a forgotten phrase of childhood, come down from the days when her mother employed "help," and now flowing from the tip of her tongue in order to accomplish complete and unmerited disaster.

Dismay and irresolution held her motionless for a moment, outside the inexorable railing that divided the room. It had not yet occurred to her to walk out of the office of the Brain Workers' Exchange; she was thrall'd in the inertia of an overwhelming despair.

"Good morning, Miss Norcross. Thank you for being prompt."

A woman who sat at another desk was speaking, in crisp, satisfying tones. Mary turned mechanically to observe the person to whom the words were addressed. She saw a girl apparently of her own age crossing the floor with an eager, nervous step; a girl dressed with a certain plain severity that unmistakably helped to give her an air of confidence. Mary was easily as well dressed herself; perhaps more expensively. Yet she felt herself suddenly lacking in every essential quality embodied in the person who had been addressed as "Miss Norcross."

"We have an excellent opportunity for you," the woman at the desk was saying. "That is why I sent an urgent message. A lady wishes a competent, well-bred young woman to perform secretarial work. It is of a social character. She will pay a good salary to the right person. We are giving you the first opportunity because of the unusually good references you possess."

There it was again. References! Mary's soul winced.

"The lady, Miss Marshall—here is her address—is known to us by reputation. We have given her an outline of your qualifications. She will wish, of course, to see your references, so take them with you. She ex-

pects you to call at three o'clock this afternoon."

"Oh—thank you!"

There was something so fervent in the words that even Mary, dulled with her own woes, did not fail to observe it. She was conscious of a faint sense of surprise that such a confident and evidently competent person as this Miss Norcross should yield to an ardent protestation of gratitude. She had good references; unusually good ones, the woman said. Why, therefore, be so eagerly thankful?

"It's nothing at all, if you have references," whispered Mary to her inner self, as she walked toward the door. It was a bitter, hopeless whisper.

Once in the outer hall, Mary Wayne paused. She had closed the door behind which crouched that cold-blooded monster—the Brain Workers' Exchange. Again she read the neatly lettered sign. What a mockery it was! Brain Workers, indeed! It was merely a meeting-place for the elect, for those who had the mystic password to the inner shrine. And she—she had everything but the mere password.

Abruptly she brushed her hand across her eyes, then began fumbling in a beaded bag.

"I'm going to cry," she said, half aloud. "And I *won't*!"

Yet she would and did, and she certainly was crying when the door of the Brain Workers' Exchange opened again and closed with a joyous click behind the young woman who had the unusually good references.

"Oh—I'm sorry," said the young woman, looking at Mary.

Mary hated herself and loathed the weakness of her tears.

"I saw you inside," continued the person named Norcross. "You've had bad luck, of course."

It was not a question, but an assertion. Mary fought against a sob.

"N-no luck," she managed.

"Never mind. You'll have better luck very soon."

"I—I'll never have any luck. I'm doomed. I—oh, it's so silly of me—but I haven't any references."

A hand was slipped within Mary's arm; she felt a gentle pressure of reassurance.



"Don't let luck down you," said the lucky one. "It always changes. Mine did; so will yours. I've just had a wonderful piece of luck and it doesn't seem right that somebody else should be unhappy."

"But you had ref—ref—references. I heard."

"Yes, my dear; I had references. They're good things to have. Come—cheer up. I've simply got to celebrate. Please come and have lunch with me. Honestly, I insist."

Mary looked wonderingly at the girl with the magic key. She wiped her-eyes bravely, then shook her head.

"I'll—I'll be all right. Thank you."

"You'll be better for lunch; so will I. Please come. I want somebody to talk to. My name is Norcross—Nell Norcross."

She was still gripping Mary's arm, with an insistence that surprised the tearful one, for Miss Norcross did not appear like a resolute and robust person, but rather one who was somewhat frail and worried, despite all her jaunty assurance of manner.

"I'm Mary Wayne—but—oh, what's the use? Thank you, just the same."

"Come along," said Miss Norcross. "I know a dandy little place. It's cheap, too. You see, I'm not very strong financially, even if I am getting a job."

She walked Mary to the elevator and down to the street level they went. Mary felt very weak of will, yet somehow comforted, as she suffered herself to be marched for several blocks to an obscure little restaurant in a basement. The strange young woman chattered all the way, but Mary had no very clear notion of what she talked about. It was not until they were seated on opposite sides of a table that she began to pay close attention.

"You must always have references," Miss Norcross was saying with an energy that was strangely in contrast with the pale, drawn cheeks and very bright eyes. "You must find a way to get some. People are so silly about them; they think more of references than of what you can really do."

"But how can I ever get them?" asked Mary. "You see, I've never worked; that is, I never worked for anybody except father. And he is dead. I'm really a very good stenographer; I can do over one hun-

dred and twenty-five words a minute. But there isn't anybody who knows I can. And there isn't a business place that will give me a chance to prove it. I've tried; and every time they ask for references."

"My dear, if you can do one hundred and twenty-five you're a better stenographer than I am; lots better. In your case it's only a question of getting started. After that, you'll go like wildfire."

"But it's the references," sighed Mary. "You've got them, you see."

"Simply because I've worked before; that's all." Miss Norcross sipped hastily from a glass of water and shook her head with a little frown of annoyance. "I'm just a bit dizzy; it's my eyes, I think—or perhaps the good luck. The thing for you to do is to get some references; surely there must be somebody who can help you out. Now, when I started—" She shook her head again. "When I started—" Another drink of water. "It's quite easy if—my dear, I'm afraid I'm going to be ill."

She announced the fact with a gasping sigh of resignation. Mary arose from her chair, startled, and walked around the table.

"I've—I've been afraid of it," said the lucky one of the references. "I haven't been very strong. Worrying, I suppose. I worried about a job. It's my head; it aches in such a funny way. Just my luck, I suppose. I—I—oh, please don't leave me!"

"I shouldn't dream of leaving you," said Mary, stoutly. "Let me take you home. Where do you live?"

"It's—" Miss Norcross whispered an address; Mary observed with conscious surprise that it was on the lower East Side. "It's written on a piece of paper—in my bag—in case you forget it—or I faint. You'll find money there—for the check. I'm sorry. I—"

The sick girl leaned forward and rested her head on her folded arms.

"Just get me home," she muttered. "After that—"

Mary took command. She paid the check out of own purse and sent the waiter out into the street to hunt for a taxi. With responsibility so suddenly thrust upon her there was no opportunity to brood upon her own troubles or the meager state of her



finances. This girl had been kindly; she could do no less than be a Samaritan herself.

The ride in the taxi was swift and, for the most part, through streets whose pavements had deteriorated in keeping with the neighborhood itself. Mary sat rigid, her feet braced in front of her, with her arm tightly clasped around the girl of the references, who sagged heavily against her, her eyes closed, her forehead and cheeks cold and damp. The cab stopped at what was evidently a boarding-house; Mary could tell a boarding-house through some queer sixth sense, developed out of cheerless experience. It was an acquired faculty in which she took no joy or pride.

A nervous and wholly pessimistic landlady assisted in the task of conveying Miss Norcross to her room, which was up three flights.

"I been expectin' it," observed the landlady. "It's been comin'. She ain't been feedin' herself right. I ain't complainin', y' understand; she's paid her bills—so far, anyhow. I hope to goodness it ain't contagious. I got my house to think about. If it's contagious—"

"Go down and telephone for a doctor," said Mary shortly.

"It's a good thing she's got a friend. If she has to go to a hospital—"

"Where is the telephone?"

"Oh, I'll go. I'll send for my own doctor, too. There isn't anybody better. I'll ask him if it's contagious and—"

Mary pushed her out of the room and turned to the patient, who was lying on the bed.

"Don't be a bit frightened," said Mary. "I don't believe you're very sick. Keep still and I'll undress you."

She felt quite composed and wholly in command of herself; it was as if she were doing something entirely commonplace and all planned in advance.

"It—it isn't just being sick," said Miss Norcross weakly. "I'm not afraid of that. It's the job—the money. I need it so. Oh, please—don't bother. I can take off my own shoes."

"Keep still," ordered Mary. "We'll have the doctor very soon."

"Doctor!" moaned the patient. "That's more money."

"Stop talking about money. Be quiet. Would you like a drink of water?"

When Mary returned with a glass she found her patient sitting up, staring at her with frightened eyes that were luminous with fever.

"I've got to talk about money!" she exclaimed. "Why, I haven't even five dollars to my name."

"There, there, my dear," said Mary. "Don't let it worry you. Neither have I."

It had cost her nearly three dollars to pay the restaurant check and the taxi-driver, but that pang had passed. She was amazed at her own indifference.

"But, don't you understand? I'm going to be sick—sick! And who's going to pay for it all? I *won't* be a charity patient; I *won't* go to a hospital. And my job! I've been trying so long and—and just when I get one—such a wonderful chance—I—oh, it's going to drive me mad, I tell you."

"Never mind; there'll be other chances. Perhaps the lady will wait. Drink your water."

But Miss Norcross pushed the glass aside.

"Jobs never wait," she moaned. "People always have to wait for jobs. That's what I've been doing, and now—now—oh, isn't it simply fiendish? And my head aches so!"

"Of course, dear. But never mind. I'll see you through. Perhaps I'll get a job myself, and—"

The sick girl gripped Mary's arm tensely.

"My job!" she whispered. "You'll take mine!"

Mary smiled rather wanly.

"I couldn't do that, of course," she said. "I haven't references—and they're expecting you. But I'll find something else; I'm sure of it."

She was anything but sure of it; she was quite certain it would be otherwise. But it was her duty, she felt, to make a brave front.

"No, no, no! You *must* take mine. Oh, can't you see—"

There was a knock, followed by a doctor. He seemed to be in a hurry, yet for all that he was quite positive about things.



No, it wasn't contagious. The landlady vanished from the threshold to spread the joyous news down-stairs. But she was a sick girl, none the less. There would be ten days in bed, at the very least. She needed medicine, of course; he would leave prescriptions. And there must be a special diet. There really ought to be a nurse. And—well, he would look in again that evening; he would decide about the nurse then.

Miss Norcross was sitting up again as the door closed behind him.

"See!" she cried. "You've just got to do it! What's going to become of *me*—and of you? It's for three o'clock. Oh, please go! Take my references. Take—"

She fell back on the pillow in a seizure of weakness.

Mary Wayne walked to the window and looked down into the drab street. Would she do it? Dared she? Had she any right? And if she did— The sick girl was whispering for water. Mary carried it to her, raised her head and steadied the glass at her lips.

"Oh, please! I'm frightened and worried—and—"

Mary made a decision.

## CHAPTER II.

### AUNT CAROLINE.

**B**ILL MARSHALL was home from college. He had fought his education to a finish, after a bitter battle that was filled with gruelling rounds of uncertainty, and now he returned in triumph to show his prize to Aunt Caroline; not that he valued the prize itself, for it was merely a diploma, but because it represented the end of the business of learning things. He was free now; he could turn his mind and his talents to life itself. Work! Oh, not necessarily. He had not thought about work.

Bill—he was infinitely too large to be called Billy or Willie—had great respect for Aunt Caroline. He wanted her to think well of him. Her home was his. There was excellent reason for the expectation that some day her fortune would be his.

There was nobody except Bill to whom it was likely to be given, except for those modest remembrances that go to the old servants who survive mistress or master. Yet Bill was neither mercenary nor covetous; he simply accepted conditions and prospects as they stood, taking it for granted that life was going to be good to him and that there was no need for anxious glances into the future. If Fate chose to make him a sole heir, why struggle against it?

"Why go to the mat with Destiny?" was the sum of Bill's philosophy. "Why go out of your class and get trimmed?"

Aunt Caroline Marshall lived in a once fashionable brownstone cave on lower Fifth Avenue. Her blood was of the bluest, which made her a conservative. She never "took part" in things. When Bill was in college there was nobody in the house except herself and the servants. She used a carriage and team, never an automobile, although she permitted Bill to have his own car as a reluctant concession to the times.

She was proud of her ancestral tree, wore lace caps and went to church every Sunday. She believed that there were still ladies and gentlemen in the world, as well as lower classes. She made preserves and put up her own mince-meat. But for all that there was no severity about Aunt Caroline. She was rather fat and comfortable and tolerant. She liked young people and somehow she had acquired a notion that Bill had a future.

"William," said Aunt Caroline, as she examined the diploma through her gold-rimmed spectacles, "I think you have done very well. If your father were alive I am sure he would say the same thing. I am going to give you a check."

"Oh, don't bother, Aunt Caroline," said Bill grandly. But he knew she would.

"It is so comforting to know that you stood at the head of your class, William." She alone used "William."

"Why—what?"

"That out of two hundred you were the very first," remarked Aunt Caroline, smoothing her black silk.

Bill was blinking. Was he being joshed by his maiden aunt?

"Why, Aunt Caroline, who—"



"Oh, the young man you brought home told me," and she beamed benevolently. "But the Marshalls always have been a modest family. We let our acts speak for themselves. I suppose I should never have found it out if your valet had not told me. His name is Peter, isn't it?"

So Pete had told her that!

"He appears to be a rather nice young man," added Aunt Caroline. "I am glad you brought him."

Bill was thinking of things to say to Pete.

"While he is, of course, your valet, William, I think we can afford to be rather considerate toward him. It seems so rare nowadays to find a young man with such high aims."

"So?" remarked Bill. This was bewildering. "Just—er—what did he say about his aims, Aunt Caroline?"

"He explained about his theological studies and how he has been earning his way through college, doing work as a valet. It was kind of you, William, to give him employment."

Bill was making the motions of swallowing. Theological studies! Why—

"He takes such a deep interest in the heathen peoples," Aunt Caroline was saying. "While I hate to see a young man bury himself away from civilization, it shows very high Christian principles. There have to be missionaries in the world, of course. He speaks so hopefully about his future life."

"Why—er—oh, yes; he's an optimist, all right, Aunt Caroline."

Bill's large bulk showed signs of considerable agitation, but his aunt did not observe them.

"I gather from what he said, William, that he is something more than just a valet to you. He told me about your talks together on theology. I feel sure that he is going to be a very good influence. He told me about how hard you worked in your classes, and the honors you won, and all the temptations you resisted. He did not say that he helped you to resist them, but he did not need to. I could understand."

Aunt Caroline nodded in confirmation of her own statement.

"I hope he is orthodox," she added. "I shall ask him about that some time."

There was a dull-red in Bill's cheeks. Suddenly he excused himself and bolted. Aunt Caroline reached for the very conservative magazine she affected.

Up-stairs in Bill's room a young man was sprawled on a couch. He was smoking a pipe and staring up at the ceiling as Bill thundered in and slammed the door behind him.

"Pete, what in blazes have you been saying to my aunt?"

The valet grinned, yawned and stretched. Bill jerked a pillow from under his head, gripped him mercilessly by one shoulder and spun him into a sitting posture.

"Ouch! Leggo, you mastodon."

"What have you been saying?" repeated Bill, savagely.

"Oh, whatever she told you, I suppose. Two to one I made it stick, anyhow."

Mr. Peter Stearns, who had accompanied Bill home from college, smiled benignly. He was a frail-looking young man, utterly unlike Bill, whose mold was heroic. He was also mild-looking; there was a baffling depth of innocence in his eyes, a placid expression of peace on his lean features. There was even a hint of piety that might pass current among the unwary.

"You filled her up with a lot of bull about me being first in the class and you having religion—you!"

"Didn't she like it?" asked Pete mildly.

"Of course she did, you fool idiot!"

"Then why the roar?"

"Because it's going to make a devil of a mess; that's why. Now we've got to live up to things."

Pete whistled a careless note and shrugged.

"That might be a good stunt, too, Bill."

Bill wheeled away in disgust, then charged back.

"You know as well as I do that we *can't* live up to it—neither of us. You've filled her bean with a lot of fool notions. Oh, Lord, Pete! I had no business to bring you."

"Bill, answer me this: am I making things more exciting?"

"Exciting! You're making them batty."



"Did I ever fail you?"

"Oh, shut up!"

"Did I ever hesitate to give the best that was in me, Bill?"

"Cut out the bunk; you can't pull it on me. Didn't I have enough trouble getting through college at all? Didn't I just miss getting the razz from the faculty? Didn't they let me through for fear if they didn't I'd come back? And now you butt in and make me the president of the class and one of those magna cum laudæ guys. Why, you'll have my Aunt Caroline writing to the college to tell 'em how happy she is and how much money she's going to leave 'em!"

Pete made a reassuring gesture.

"No, she won't, Bill. I'll fix that the next time I talk to her. I'll tell her—"

"You won't tell her one damn thing. You've said plenty now. You lay off, do you hear? You—you—divinity student!"

Pete smiled brightly.

"Do you know, Bill, when I did that I honestly believe I pulled a new stunt. I doubt if it's been done before. Don't sneer, Bill; I mean it. And don't you worry about my getting away with it. I'll swing the job; you watch."

"But why in blazes did you have to start in telling lies?"

"Why, I was only making things softer for you, old man. We'll assume your aunt has always been fond of you, although God knows why. Anyhow, we'll assume it. But she's more than fond of you now, Bill. She thinks you're not only a lovable mountain, but she also thinks you're the world's leading intellect. Why? Simply because I told an innocent fib that has harmed nobody."

Bill grunted savagely.

"As for the rest of it," remarked Pete, "each of us must carve his own destiny. I carved mine according to such lights as I had at the moment. Your aunt is pleased with me; most ladies are. Tut, Bill; I speak but the simple truth. What there is about me I don't know. Something too subtle for analysis, I fancy. But, anyhow, you old rip, she likes me. In giving myself an excellent character I also aid you, which was something I had particularly in mind.

I am always your little helper, Bill; always and forever. Your aunt feels that it confers honor upon you to consort with a young man of religious tendencies. You have risen a hundred per cent, not only as an intellectual, but as a moralist. Why, it's almost like having religion yourself, Bill."

Bill Marshall shook a stern finger of warning.

"You've got to stop it, Pete. I won't stand for it. You'll ruin us!"

"Oh, I'll get by," said Pete, comfortably.

"Will you? I think you're riding for a fall. How far will you get if she ever finds out you come from the Stearns family?"

Pete became thoughtful.

"She doesn't like us, does she?"

"She thinks your whole outfit is poison. Understand, Pete; I'm only saying what *she* thinks. I haven't any of the family prejudice myself."

"That's nice."

"As a matter of fact, I don't know what the trouble is all about, anyhow. It goes away back. It's a sort of an old family feud; I never bothered with it. It's nothing in my life—but it is in Aunt Caroline's. All you've got to do is to mention the name to her and she broadsides. Why, if she knew that I had anything to do with a Stearns I wouldn't last five minutes under this roof."

"I won't tell her, Bill," said Pete, soothingly.

Aunt Caroline's heir presumptive packed a pipe and lighted it. For several minutes he smoked ferociously.

"I'm afraid I've made a mistake in bringing you here at all," he said. "It's bad enough to have you a Stearns; but if she knew you had been expelled from college—well, it can't be expressed. Why did you have to insist on being my valet, anyhow? If you'd just come along as a friend, under any old name, it would have been a lot better."

"No, Bill; I figured that all out. Your Aunt Caroline was suspicious of all college friends; you told me so yourself. She worried about bad company and all that sort of thing. But she won't worry about a poor



young man who is working his way in the world and getting ready to reform the heathen. No; I'm better as a valet. Besides, I don't have to give any name except Peter, which is my own. That keeps you from making breaks and saves me from telling a lie."

Bill shook his head gloomily.

"We're off to a bad start," he grumbled. "I don't like it."

"Well, let's be gay and bold about it, anyhow," said Pete. "To become practical, Bill, what sort of accommodations do I draw here? Do I room with you?"

"In your capacity as my valet I imagine you'll get a room in the servants' quarters. Aunt Caroline may put you out in the stable."

"That's a pleasant way to treat a pal," observed Pete.

"Take my tip and get that pal stuff out of your head. You'll forget yourself in front of my aunt some day."

There was a knock at the door and Bill found one of the maids standing in the hall.

"Your aunt would like to see you in the library, Mr. William, if it's convenient," she said.

"I'll be right down."

He turned and glared at Pete.

"I've got a hunch that she's tumbled to you already," he said. "If she has, you'd better go out by that wondow; it's only a twenty-foot jump."

Pete smiled easily.

"Bet you three to one she hasn't tumbled. Now you trot along, Bill, and cheer up."

Bill could not shake off his premonition of trouble as he walked slowly down-stairs. With disquieting clearness he sensed that all was not right with his world. Nor did this feeling leave him even when Aunt Caroline removed her spectacles and looked up, smiling.

"It's something I just remembered, William, I wanted to speak to you about your secretary."

"Secretary, Aunt Caroline? He's my valet."

"Oh, no; I don't mean Peter. I mean your secretary."

Bill shook his head to signify he did not understand.

"The secretary I am going to engage for you, William."

"What secretary? What would I do with a secretary, Aunt Caroline?"

"Your social secretary," said Aunt Caroline.

"My social—I'm afraid I don't get you, aunty."

"It is very easily explained, William. All persons who lead an active life in society require a secretary."

Bill stared at his benevolent aunt.

"Holy smoke, Aunt Caroline! I'm not in society."

"But you will be, my dear nephew."

"Never!"

"Oh, yes, William—soon."

"But—Aunt Caroline—I don't want to go into society. I haven't any use for it. I'm not built—"

"There, now, William. We must always put our duty before our mere inclinations. It is your duty to enter society."

Bill almost trembled. This was worse than anything his imagination had conjured. He felt deeply dismayed and, at the same time, excessively foolish.

"Duty?" he echoed. "Duty? Why, how in—how can it be a duty, Aunt Caroline? You've got me knocked cold."

She smiled gently and patiently.

"It is your duty to the family, William. It is something your father would wish. He had a distinguished position in society. Your grandfather's position was even more distinguished. Because of the fact that I am a spinster it has not been possible for me to maintain the family tradition. But for you, William—why, the whole world of society is open to you. It is waiting for you."

Aunt Caroline clasped her hands in a spell of ecstasy.

"But, my dear aunt, I don't know anybody in society," groaned Bill.

"A Marshall can go anywhere," she answered proudly.

"But I don't *want* to. I'm not fit for it. I'd feel like a jay. I can't dance, Aunt Caroline, I can't talk, I can't doll up—hang it! Look at the size of me. I tell you I'm



too big for society. I'd step on it; I'd smother it. I'd break it all into pieces."

"William, nonsense!"

"It's not nonsense; it's the goods, Aunt Caroline. Why, I couldn't even sneak in the back way."

"No Marshall ever sneaks in anywhere," said Aunt Caroline, with a trace of sternness that Bill did not miss. When his aunt was stern, which was rare, it was an omen. "The family pride and the family honor are now in your hands, William, and if you are a Marshall you will be true to them."

"But—oh, I want to do something serious," pleaded Bill.

"What, for instance?"

Bill was stalled. He did not know what. It was merely the clutch of a drowning man at a straw.

"You will find that society is serious, very serious," observed Aunt Caroline. "There may be some who think it is frivolity; but not the society in which the Marshalls are known. None of us can escape the heritage of our blood, William; none of us should try. If the world of fashion calls you as a leader, it is simply your destiny calling."

Bill regarded his aunt with horror-stricken eyes. He had never thought of a Destiny garbed in the grotesque. For one awful instant he saw himself the perfect gentleman, moving in a wholly polite and always correct little world, smiling, smirking, carrying ices, going to operas, wearing cutaways and canes, drinking tea, talking smartly, petting lap-dogs, handing damosels into limousines, bowing, dancing, holding the mirror to propriety—he—Bill Marshall—old Walloping Bill. His knees shook. Then he brushed the fearsome picture from his mind.

"Aunt Caroline, it's utterly impossible!"

"William, I have decided."

For a few seconds he faced her, matching her glance. He was red with belligerence; Aunt Caroline had the composure of placid adamant. He knew that look. Again the dread picture began to fashion itself; there was weakness in his soul.

"But listen, Aunt Caroline; I'm such a roughneck—"

"William!"

He made a ponderous gesture of despair and walked out of the library.

### CHAPTER III

#### ENGAGED.

OUT of the library and through the parlor—there was a parlor in the Marshall home—strode Bill, with each step gathering speed and assuming the momentum of an avalanche. Things that were in his way suffered consequences. Not that Bill was clumsy at all, although he thought he was, as most men do who belong in the oversize class. He was simply for the moment disregardful of property. Sometimes he believed in the innate perversity of inanimate matter and comported himself accordingly. He was in a hopeless anguish of mind. Oh, that Aunt Caroline should have pressed this cup to his lips!

Through the parlor and into the reception-room. A high-backed chair lay in his path. He placed a foot against it and shot it across the floor, the chair moving on its casters as smoothly as a roller coaster. It hit the wall, spun around and a young woman fell out of it.

Bill halted to stare.

"Holy smoke!"

Then he was across the room, picking her up.

"Oh, I beg a million pardons!"

By this time she was on her feet, very pink in the cheeks and with eyes all amaze. Bill was steadying her with a reassuring hand, but she drew away quickly. It was quite plain that as soon as her surprise passed she would become angry. Bill sensed this in a swift glance.

"Two million!" he said hastily.

She regarded him uncertainly. Gray eyes, straight nose, pleasant mouth, but rather large, fluffy sort of hair that might be reddish in a strong light—all these things Bill was observing. And then—yes, she had freckles; not aggressive, spacious freckles, but small, timid, delicately tinted freckles—the kind of freckles that are valuable to the right sort of girl. Bill liked freckles.

"Three million," he said, and grinned.



"I'll take you at the last figure," she answered.

"Good. I'm awfully obliged. I suppose there's no use asking if I startled you?"

"Quite useless. You did."

"It was very childish of me," said Bill, more humbly. "You see, the chair was in my way."

"And you refused to be thwarted," she nodded gravely.

"I certainly did. I was angry about something and—say, are you kidding me?"

This time she smiled and Bill grinned again, sheepishly.

"Anyhow, the chair wasn't where it belonged," he said. "And when you sit in it your head doesn't even stick over the top. I had no idea there was anybody in it, of course."

"Of course," she assented. There was a funny little wrinkle at the corner of her mouth.

"See here," said Bill sharply. "You *are* kidding me, and—well, I'm glad I kicked the chair."

"But really, I don't think either of us was to blame," said the young woman. "I knew the chair wasn't in its regular place. It was moved over here for me."

"What for?"

"So I could look at the ancestors."

Bill glanced at the wall, where Grandfather and Grandmother Marshall hung in their golden frames.

"Now, who in blazes did that?" he demanded.

"I don't know. Some young man." She spoke as if young men were articles. "I called to see Miss Marshall and a maid left me here for a few minutes. And then this young man came into the room. He asked me if I was interested in ancestors; that was the very first thing he said. And I said I was!"

"Are you?"

"Certainly. So he moved the chair to the center of the room and made me sit in it. He wanted me to be where I could get a proper light on the ancestors, he said. And then he explained them to me. He was very interesting."

"He is interesting," admitted Bill. "But he is an awful liar!"

"Isn't that too bad!"

"Oh, not necessarily. It's really not very important whether he tells the truth or tells lies. You see, he's only a servant."

"Oh."

"My valet."

"I see," she said slowly

"It was very impertinent of him," said Bill. "He is an exceptionally good servant, but he is rather erratic at times. I shall speak to him about it."

"Oh, please don't. He really didn't offend me."

"Doesn't make any difference," declared Bill, sternly. "I won't have him forgetting his place. Won't you sit down again? I won't bother you to look at the ancestors."

But scarcely had she seated herself than they were interrupted. A maid came in to say that Miss Marshall would see her. To Bill it seemed that the stranger became suddenly preoccupied. She was chewing her lip as she walked out of the room and did not even nod to him.

"More of her later from Aunt Caroline," muttered Bill. "And now for a brief word with Pete Stearns."

When Mary Wayne stood in the presence of Aunt Caroline she wondered if she looked as guilty as she felt; it seemed as if "Fraud" must be blazoned in black letters across her forehead. But Aunt Caroline did not appear to discern anything suspicious. She smiled cordially and even extended a hand.

"Please sit down," she said.

Mary sat down. She knew that a social secretary ought to be at ease anywhere, and she was trying hard. Back in the reception-room, where she had encountered two odd young men, she had been surprised at her own poise; for a brief interval all thought of her deception had been driven from her mind. But now, sitting face to face with a kindly old lady who accepted her at face value, Mary was suffering from conscience. She found herself gripping the arm of her chair tensely, girding up her nerves to meet some sudden accusation.

"Miss Norcross, I believe?" said Aunt Caroline.

"Ah—yes."



There! The thing was done. She had not done it very confidently, but the lie evidently passed current. When it became apparent that Aunt Caroline had no thought of thrusting a stern finger under her nose, Mary breathed again.

"The people who sent you speak very highly of you," remarked Aunt Caroline. "Did they explain to you the nature of the work that would be required?"

"You wished a secretary, I understood."

"A social secretary."

"Yes; they told me that."

"Would you mind giving me some idea of your experience?"

Mary hesitated. She had not prepared herself for this; she was neither forehanded nor wise in the ways of fraud.

"Perhaps," she managed to say. "You would like to see some references."

She tried to placate her conscience in that speech; it seemed a smaller lie than saying "my" references.

"If you please," and Aunt Caroline adjusted her spectacles.

The references came out of Mary's bag. As the mistress of the Marshall mansion took them Mary was thinking:

"Now I am a forger as well as a liar."

Aunt Caroline read the first slowly and aloud, and looked up to find her caller blushing.

"Oh, I am sure it must be honest praise, my dear. Do I confuse you by reading aloud?"

She passed to the next, glancing first at the signature.

"Why," exclaimed Aunt Caroline, "it's from Mrs. Rokeby-Jones. Is it *the* Mrs. Rokeby-Jones?"

Now, Mary had never heard of the lady. She did not know whether she was "the," or merely "a," and to cover the point without committing herself to the unknown she nodded. Aunt Caroline nodded in return and read the reference.

"I am very pleasantly surprised, Miss Norcross," she said. "This is what I should call a very distinguished reference. Of course, we all know Mrs. Rokeby-Jones; that is, I mean, by reputation. Personally, I have never had the pleasure of meeting her. You see, my dear, I am rather old-

fashioned and do not go out very much. Mrs. Rokeby-Jones! Dear me, why, everybody knows her."

Mary almost said "Do they?" The name of Rokeby-Jones meant nothing to her.

"She speaks remarkably well of you," observed Aunt Caroline, again glancing at the reference.

Mary had not even read it. She was too much of a novice for that, and there had been too many things to distract her.

"Quite a cultured lady, I am told, Miss Norcross."

"Yes—quite."

Aunt Caroline was about to pass to the next reference, hesitated and glanced up.

"You know, we women are curious, my dear. I should like to ask you something."

Mary was gripping the chair again. What now?

Aunt Caroline leaned forward and lowered her voice.

"Is it really true—what they say about her daughter?"

The candidate for social secretary somehow felt that the bottom was dropping out of things. What ought she to say? What could she say? And what was it that anybody said about Mrs. Rokeby-Jones's daughter?

"I mean the older daughter," added Aunt Caroline.

So there were two. Mary was staring down at her lap, frowning in bewilderment. How would she find Mrs. Rokeby-Jones's elder daughter—guilty or not guilty? If she only knew what people said about her. Probably it had been in the newspapers. Oh, why hadn't she seen it?

"I admit I merely ask from curiosity," said Aunt Caroline, yet hopefully.

Mary looked up and made her decision. Even the meanest prisoner at the bar was entitled to the benefit of a doubt. Why not Mrs. Rokeby-Jones's daughter?

"Personally, I have never believed it," said Mary.

Aunt Caroline sighed happily.

"I am so glad," she said. "That means it isn't true, because you would know. It always seemed to me it was such a strange and cruel thing to say. Of course, I under-



stand, that there are certain family traits on the Rokeby-Jones side. But it doesn't follow, even then. Just how did the story ever come to get about, my dear?"

"I—really, I— Would you mind if I didn't discuss it, Miss Marshall?"

Aunt Caroline hastily put away the reference and passed to the next.

"You are perfectly right, my dear," she said. "I ought not to have asked you. I think you show a very fine sense of honor in not wanting to talk about it. I'm quite ashamed of myself. Still, I'm very glad to know it isn't true."

She examined the remaining references, obtaining fresh satisfaction from the discovery that the famous Mrs. Hamilton was fully as ardent in her encomiums as Mrs. Rokeby-Jones.

"I must say that your references please me extremely," said Aunt Caroline, as she finished reading the last one. "Your trip abroad with Mrs. Hamilton must have been a charming experience. I shall ask you to tell me about it some time. When will you be able to come?"

And thus Mary knew that she was engaged.

"I can start any time," she said.

"To-morrow?"

"Yes, Miss Marshall."

"That will do excellently. You will send your trunk here, of course. I should prefer to have you live with us."

This was something Mary had given no thought, but it sounded wonderful. No more boarding-house. And it would save money, too; there was no telling how much would be needed for the sick girl on the East Side.

Aunt Caroline rang a bell and asked the maid to serve tea.

"We'll have a little chat about terms and other things," she said comfortably.

The little chat lasted the better part of an hour, but it passed without embarrassments. The terms were beyond Mary's hopes. As for Aunt Caroline, she was quaint and captivating. Strange to say, she did not ask many more questions. For the most part, she talked about herself; occasionally she reverted to Mary's references which, it was obvious, had made an

indelible impression. Mary discovered a prompt liking for the old lady, and the more she liked her the more shame she had in the masquerade she was playing. Only the desperate plight of a sick girl kept her nerved to the ordeal.

She was taking her leave when Aunt Caroline remarked casually:

"I feel sure that you will not find my nephew unduly exacting in the work he expects of you."

"Nephew?" asked Mary.

"How odd, my dear. I didn't tell you, did I? I'm afraid I forget things sometimes. You see, you are not my secretary at all. You are to be secretary to my nephew."

Mary stared.

"Why—I—"

"Oh, Miss Norcross! You mustn't say you can't. You will find him most considerate. He is really a brilliant fellow. He stood first in his class at college, and he is even interested in religious matters. He has a very promising social career ahead of him."

Something was whirling in Mary's brain. She felt as though she were shooting through space, and then bringing up against a wall at the farther end of it, where a large and grinning person stood offering apologies by the million. She was going to be secretary to *him*—she knew it.

"Say that you will try it, anyhow," pleaded Aunt Caroline. "I insist."

Too late for retreat, thought Mary. Besides, what difference did it make, after all? The money had to be earned. And she felt quite sure that he would not dream of asking her about Mrs. Rokeby-Jones's daughter.

"I shall report in the morning," she said.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### "THE WEB WE WEAVE."

IT was an excellent morning for a grouch, there being a drizzle outside, and Bill Marshall's grouch was carefully nursed by the owner. He had breakfasted alone, Aunt Caroline rarely taking that meal down-stairs. It would have been a comfort



to have had Pete at breakfast, for Pete was entitled to the full benefit of the grouch; but a man cannot eat with his valet and preserve caste with the remaining servants in the house. Up-stairs again in his own rooms, Bill was railing at life, which now stretched before him as cheerless as a black void.

"Society! I'm ruined if it ever gets back to the gang."

"You'll get to like it," Pete assured him. "They all do."

"Oh, stop lying. Do I look like a Rollo?"

"But you'll change, Bill. You won't keep on being uncouth. Influence of environment, you know."

"Cut out the rot, Pete. Can't you take this thing seriously? I tell you, it's going to ruin me."

"And you so young," commented Pete. "Bill, I'll admit it looks tough just now. But what the deuce can you do about it? There's Aunt Caroline, you know."

A rumbling growl from Bill.

"She cuts quite a figure in your scheme of existence, Bill. You've got to play along with her, up to a certain point—or go to work. And what would you work at? They wouldn't start off by making you president of anything. I know that much about business myself."

"I'm not afraid to take a chance at work."

"Not you. But how about the fellow that gives out the jobs? And, besides, Aunt Caroline hasn't said anything about your going to work, as I understand it. She's got higher ideals right now."

"Pete, I tell you I'm not going to stand for this without a fight. I haven't promised anything yet."

Pete grinned.

"Maybe you didn't promise, but you marched off the field, and Aunt Caroline didn't. You went through all the motions of taking a beating. Bill, she hung the Indian sign on you right then. They never come back after the champ puts 'em away. I'll string a little bet on Aunt Caroline."

Bill growled again, seized the morning paper, essayed to read it, then flung it across the room.

"Never on the front page, Bill," said Pete. "They always print it opposite the editorial page."

"What?"

"The society news."

"Oh, go to blazes!" Bill's grouch was as virile as himself. "And see here, Pete. I'll beat this game yet. They can't put me into society without a secretary, can they? Well, you stand by and see how long any Willy-boy secretary holds a job with me. You keep time on it. The main part of his job will be his exit. And, believe me, he'll *want* to go."

Bill towered importantly in the center of the room.

"If he's my secretary he takes orders from me, doesn't he? And I have to have my daily exercise, don't I? Well, his first job every day is to put on the gloves for half an hour. After that he can open the mail, if he's able."

Pete smiled a tribute of admiration.

"It's good as far as it goes, Bill. Yes, you can lick a secretary. There isn't any doubt he'll take the air as soon as he comes to. But then you've got nothing between you and the old champ. And, as I said before, I'm stringing with Aunt Caroline."

Pete strolled to the window and observed the drizzling morning. Also, he observed something else—something that caused him to turn about with a show of genuine enthusiasm.

"Bill," he whispered loudly, "she's in again."

"Who?"

"Little Gray Eyes."

"Who?"

"Man dear, the girl. The mysterious lady. The one that took a liking to me. The one—"

Bill strode to the window.

"Oh, she's inside now," said Pete. "I heard the door closing. Bill, I must have made a hit."

He went over to the dresser, picked up Bill's brushes and began work on his hair.

"Pete, you can cut that out right now. You don't leave this room. Understand?"

"But maybe she's back to look at the ancestors again. She liked the way I talked about 'em, and—"



Bill pushed his valet violently into a chair.

"Pete, you've got to behave. I had trouble enough explaining about you yesterday. My Aunt Caroline's friends don't call here to see the servants—and you're a servant. Get me?"

"Don't be a snob, Bill."

"I'm not. But I'm your boss; that is, while you're in this house. If you don't like it, blame yourself. You invented this valet stuff. Now live up to it. Keep your own place or you'll have everything coming down in a grand smash."

Pete looked up at him sourly.

"Bill; you act jealous."

"Who? Me? Bull!"

"Bill, you *are* jealous."

"Don't be an ass. I don't even know the lady. She's nothing to me. But I intend to protect Aunt Caroline's guests—"

Bill was cut short by a knock and a message from a maid. Following its receipt, he walked over to the dresser and examined his scarf.

"Brush me off," he commanded.

"Go to the devil," remarked his valet. "And look here, Bill; play this square. Don't you go taking advantage of my position. Be a sport now. And if Gray Eyes—"

Bill was out of the room.

Down in the library he found Aunt Caroline—and the young woman with the gray eyes. The freckles were there, too; he saw them in a better light now and decided they were just the right shade of unobtrusiveness.

"William," said Aunt Caroline, "this is Miss Norcross."

Mary Wayne had arisen from her chair. It seemed to Bill that she lacked something of the poise that he had remarked on the afternoon before. There was uncertainty in her glance; an air of hesitation rather than of confidence was asserting itself. When he upset her chair in the reception-room she had rallied with discomfiting assurance; now she betrayed timidity.

"Mighty glad to meet you," said Bill, with a large, amiable smile.

He found it necessary to reach for her hand, and when he had possessed himself of it he discovered that it was trembling.

She murmured something that he did not

catch; evidently it was a mere formality. Bill regarded her with faint perplexity; she was behaving quite differently this morning. He wondered if it would be a good idea to say something about yesterday. Had she told Aunt Caroline? No; probably not. If she had, Aunt Caroline would certainly have chided him for working himself into a childish fury. Perhaps it would be embarrassing to mention the matter. He decided to let "Miss Norcross" take the initiative.

"Miss Norcross is ready to start this morning," explained Aunt Caroline.

Was she? thought Bill. Start what, or where?

"Too bad it should be raining," he observed. Then he could have chastised himself; it was such a futile commonplace. Pete would never have said anything so stupid.

"I think it will be more convenient for both of you to use the sun-parlor room on the second floor," said Aunt Caroline. "Here in the library there are so many interruptions."

"Er—yes; interruptions," said Bill.

Well, what interruptions? What was all this about, anyhow? From Aunt Caroline he turned to the girl. Evidently she did not think it was for her to explain; she avoided his glance.

"Oh, perhaps I forgot to explain, William," Aunt Caroline smiled at her own omission. "Miss Norcross is your secretary."

Bill started to whistle, but it died on his lips. Truth, out in the light at last, was overwhelming him. He looked again at his secretary; this time she did not avoid his eyes, but her expression puzzled him. As nearly as he could read it, there was a pleading there. As for Bill himself, he knew that his face was growing red. This girl—his secretary! All his hastily conceived plans were crashing. Aunt Caroline had spiked a gun.

"Miss Norcross has some remarkably fine references, William, and I see no reason why you should not get along very well," added Aunt Caroline.

"Ah—none whatever," he said clumsily.

"I think now you might show her the way up-stairs, William."

Without a word, Bill turned and led the way. He wondered if his ears were red, too, and if she could notice them from the back. He had a mad desire to run. He actually did start taking the stairs two at a time, then remembered and fell into a dignified pace.

A girl secretary! Oh, Aunt Caroline!

"How 'll I get rid of her?" thought Bill. "I can't beat her up. I can't swear at her. And why does she have to be a secretary, anyhow? It isn't a square deal. If this ever gets out—oh, boy!"

Mary Wayne followed primly, although she was in a tumultuous state of mind. Of course she had had a night to dwell upon it, but now that she was really entering upon the adventure it seemed more formidable than ever. What an amazingly large person he was; it seemed contradictory, somehow, that a brilliant society man, such as described by Aunt Caroline, should run so aggressively to bulk. And he seemed embarrassed; he was not at all like the man who kicked her chair across the room.

Bill, with the air of a man about to face a firing squad, moved grimly along the upper hall in the direction of the sun-parlor room. There was nothing heroic in his bearing; rather, there was the resignation of despair. And then something happened to awaken him.

Pete Stearns, coming down from the third floor, spotted him.

"Say, listen—"

Then Pete spotted the girl and the sentence froze. He stood with his mouth agape, staring at the procession.

Bill jerked his head higher and set his shoulders. Pete Stearns wouldn't get any satisfaction out of this, if he knew it. He eyed his valet coldly.

"Don't forget to sponge and press those suits, and hurry up about it," he ordered roughly. "When you've done that I may have some errands for you. Look sharp."

He strode past Pete, and Mary Wayne followed. She did not even glance at the amazed valet. Pausing at a door, Bill opened it and held it wide.

"This way, if you please, Miss Norcross," he said, with a bow whose courtliness astonished himself.

She entered the sun-parlor room, Bill followed—and closed the door.

Out in the hall Pete Stearns was leaning against the wall.

"I'll be damned!" he whispered. "The lucky stiff."

Beyond the door Bill was facing Nemesis. She looked neither perilous nor forbidding; she was just a girl with a lot of nice points, so far as he could see. The encounter with Pete had braced him; perhaps it had even elevated him somewhat in her eyes. He felt the need of elevation; Aunt Caroline had managed to give him a sense of pampered unmanliness. Evidently the girl was waiting for him to begin.

"I guess you didn't tell Aunt Caroline how I booted you across the room last night," said Bill.

"No," she answered.

"That's good."

And he felt that it was good. This mutual reticence, so far as Aunt Caroline was concerned, tentatively served as a bond. He waved her gallantly to a chair, and she sat first on the edge of it; then, remembering that a social secretary should be a person of ease, she settled back.

"What has my aunt been telling you about me?" he demanded suddenly.

"Why—er—nothing. That is, she told me you wanted a social secretary."

"She did, eh? She said I *wanted* one?"

Mary hesitated for a second.

"Perhaps she did not put it exactly that way—Mr. Marshall. But of course I understand you wanted one. I was engaged for that purpose."

"Did she tell you I was in society?"

"I don't remember that she did. But I took that for granted."

"Do I look as if I was in society?"

"I—I can't say." She found the young man somewhat disconcerting. "Aren't you?"

"No!" Bill thundered it.

"Oh!"

"I'm not in society, and I'm not going in. I wouldn't go into society if they closed up everything else."

Mary experienced a pang of dismay.

"Then I'm afraid there's some mistake;" she faltered. "I'm sorry."



"Wait a minute," said Bill, drawing up a chair for himself and facing her. "Don't worry, now. Let's get this straightened out. I'll explain. My aunt wants me to go into society. I want to stay out. She's got a lot of ideas about keeping up the family reputation. I'd sooner go get a new one. So she hires a social secretary for me—and take it from me, Miss Norcross, I don't need a social secretary any more than I need crutches. I don't need any kind of a secretary."

Mary's heart was sinking. This was the end of her job; it had all been too good to be true. He must have read this thought in her eyes, for he continued hastily:

"Now, don't get scared. I'm trying to figure this thing out so it'll suit all hands. You see, this has sort of taken me by surprise. I wasn't expecting you as a secretary; I was expecting a man."

"Oh," said Mary faintly.

"And I was going to get rid of him—pronto. I had it all doped out. But"—Bill grinned—"I can't get rid of you that way."

Mary suddenly stiffened. She was not accustomed to having men get rid of her; she could get rid of herself. She arose from her chair.

Bill reached forth a long arm and calmly pushed her back into it. She flushed angrily. No matter how badly she needed work she did not intend to be treated as a child. But again he was employing that disarming grin.

"Easy now—please. I guess I'm rough, but I don't mean it that way. I suppose you need a job, don't you?"

Mary considered for an instant.

"Of course," she said, with a touch of dignity, "I should not have applied for a place I did not need."

"Sure; I get you. Listen, now: You can hold this job as long as you like; you can be social secretary or any other kind—only I'm not going into society."

"Will you please explain that?"

"It's easy. So long as my aunt thinks I'm going into society—fine. So long as I stay out of it—fine. I haven't any objections to having a secretary, on that basis."

Mary shook her head.

"That would be practising a deception on your aunt," she said.

Oh, Mary!

But what Mary had in her mind was not the drawing of a fine distinction between one deception and another. She had not forgotten that already she was a deceiver. What troubled her was this: She liked Aunt Caroline. Thus far she had done that nice old lady no harm, even though she posed as Nell Norcross. But to take Aunt Caroline's money and give nothing in return was very different. That would be stealing. And, besides, she felt that the acceptance of Bill's idea would put her in an equivocal position toward him.

"But Aunt Caroline will never know," said Bill, who had no scruples on this point. "And you will be able to keep right on in your job."

Again Mary shook her head. She would have risen but for the fear that he would push her back into the chair a second time.

"I would be accepting charity," she declared firmly. "I do not need to do that."

Even her thought of the sick girl in the boarding-house did not prevent her from making this renunciation. Not even to supply Nell Norcross with a doctor, a nurse and medicine would she accept charity.

"I had better go down and explain the situation to Miss Marshall and then go," she added.

When she said that she did not realize how vulnerable was the spot in which she attacked him. Bill sensed the blow instantly.

"No, no!" he almost shouted. "You can't do that. You couldn't explain it to her in a million years."

Bill was worried. He did not know that young women were so difficult to please. He was worried about what Aunt Caroline would say. He knew that she was not only determined he should have a social secretary, but he divined that she wished him to have this particular secretary. More than that, on his own account, he was not yet ready to see the last of this young person. Still further, there was the desirable project of humiliating Pete Stearns in even greater degree.

"Then you may explain it to her," sug-

gested Mary, clinging desperately to her remnant of conscience.

"I can't explain it any better than you can," groaned Bill. "I tried to, yesterday, and flivvered."

There was half a minute of silence, conversation having ended in a *cul de sac*. Both turned toward the door with a breath of relief when it opened softly, after a premonitory knock. Pete Stearns stood on the threshold.

He glanced not at all at Bill; his eyes were for Mary alone.

"Well?" demanded Bill.

"I thought, sir," said Pete, still watching Mary, "that unless you were in a hurry about your clothes—"

Bill cut him short with a gesture.

"I am in a hurry," he snapped, glaring at his valet. "What's more, I do not wish to be interrupted when I am busy with my secretary."

Pete's eyebrows went up nearly an inch. The news was staggering—but it solved a mystery. Unmistakable hints of a smile lurked on his lips. Then he bowed deeply—at Mary.

"Very good, sir," he said, and closed the door.

Bill turned again toward his secretary.

"Ultimately, I'm going to assassinate that valet," he said. "I'm only waiting in order to get my alibi perfected."

Mary found herself smiling.

"Now," said Bill, "let's talk business again. I think I know a way to straighten this out."

## CHAPTER V.

### SOCIAL SECRETARYING.

WHEN half an hour had passed Bill was still talking, and Mary had confirmed certain tentative impressions concerning his respect for the opinions of Aunt Caroline; or, rather, not so much for her opinions as for her authority. She saw that Bill had substantial reasons for at least an outward semblance of acquiescence in his aunt's plans.

Bill found that it was quite easy to talk to his secretary. She was an attentive,

accurate listener; she seldom interrupted him with questions. She simply sat and absorbed things, with her hands folded in her lap and her whole posture that of trained concentration. Out of her gray eyes she would watch him steadily, but not in a disconcerting way. There was nothing in her eyes that should not have been there, not even one of those quizzical flashes that had temporarily unsettled him the afternoon before. To say that she was demure might, perhaps, suggest the artificiality of a pose; therefore, she was not demure. She was simply decorous, in a perfectly natural way.

"So, then," Bill was saying, "my idea is this: Not being in society, and never having been there, naturally I can't take a running jump into the middle of it. An outsider has to be eased in, I don't care who his family is, unless he's a foreigner. In my case it ought to take some time to fight my way through the preliminaries. Now, I'm not saying yet that I'll go in, mind you. But I'm willing to see the thing started. I don't want you to get the idea that I'm pigheaded. I might change my mind."

He knew that he wouldn't, but Mary nodded.

"So, why not go ahead with the job and see what comes of it? That's playing square with Aunt Caroline, I'm sure. Later on, if the time comes when it's all off, we'll go and tell her so and ask for a new deal. How about it? Fair enough?"

"Yes," said Mary slowly, "that seems to be fair—provided you're sincere."

"Miss Norcross, I'm the soul of sincerity."

For that protestation she suspected him, yet she did not feel justified in pressing scruples too far. She was not a hypocrite.

"If you are really going to try it, then, I suppose you will have need of a secretary."

"My idea exactly," said Bill heartily. "Shake."

She shook.

"I'm glad that's settled," he declared, with a comfortable stretch. "Now we can talk about something else."

Mary's eyebrows went up almost imperceptibly.

"Seen the 'Follies' yet?" asked Bill.



"No? Say, don't miss it. I've been twice. Think I'll go again, too. Lot of good shows in town, but I'm 'way behind on them."

He was regarding her with such a speculative eye that Mary felt the need of a change of subject. She arose and began removing her hat.

"I think I had better go to work," she said.

"Work? Oh, sure; I forgot. Certainly. Er—what at?"

"We might start on your correspondence," she suggested.

"I'm game. Who'll we write to?"

"Why—how should I know, Mr. Marshall? That's for you to say."

Bill rubbed his ear.

"Hanged if I know who to write to," he mused. "I never had the habit. I suppose it's done regularly—in society."

"It is considered quite important to attend promptly to all correspondence," said Mary. That was a safe generalization, she thought, applicable to society as well as business.

Bill began fumbling in a coat-pocket and eventually drew forth some papers.

"I haven't had a letter in a week," he said. "You see, what I get mostly is bills. Aunt Caroline attends to those. But here's a letter I got last week; we could begin on that, I suppose."

He drew it out of the envelope and then shook his head.

"Too late, I'm afraid. The party was last night. I had another date and didn't go."

"But you sent them word, of course."

"No, indeed; never bothered about it."

Mary looked disturbed; her sense of order was really offended.

"I think that was very wrong," she observed.

"Oh they'll get over it," said Bill easily. "It was only a poker outfit, anyhow."

"Oh."

Bill finished examining his papers and tossed them into the fireplace.

"Not a thing in the world that needs an answer," he sighed contentedly. "Ever occur to you, Miss Norcross, that there's a lot of paper wasted? If people would only

put letters in their pockets and carry them for a couple of weeks, nine-tenths of them wouldn't need to be answered."

Mary was frowning.

"After this I hope you'll let me take charge of your mail," she said.

"It's all yours," said Bill generously. "I never get anything interesting, anyhow. Now, what 'll we do?"

The situation was perplexing to her. She could not sit all morning simply talking to him; that might be social but not secretarial. There was a business relation to be preserved.

"You might plan out things," she suggested. "Give me your ideas about your—your—"

"Career?" he asked, with elaborate irony, and she nodded.

"Not for anything," said Bill. "I haven't any ideas. That's your part of it. I'm going to let you handle the planning along with the correspondence. You've got more dope on it than I have. You're the manager, or maybe the chaperon. I'm only the débutante."

As Mary regarded this large and impossible débutante the mere suggestion of chaperoning him appalled her.

"But surely you've got some suggestions," she said.

"Not a solitary one. Where would I get any? I've been on the outside all my life, not even looking in. Is it all right for me to smoke? Thanks. No; it's up to you. But remember—there's no rush. Don't get the idea I'm driving you. Why, you can take all the time in the world. Take six months; take a year. Think it over."

"A year!" echoed Mary. "But you ought to start right away."

"Why?"

"Why—so you can enjoy the—er—advantages of society."

"Well, Mr. Bones—I mean Miss Norcross, of course—what are the advantages of society?"

He stood against the mantel, his feet spread wide, his hands deep in his pockets, staring down at her with a challenging grin.

Mary became confused. Her soul was crying out in protest at the unfairness of

it. What did she know about the advantages of society? And yet she must know. Was it possible he suspected her? Any social secretary ought to have the advantages of society at the tip of her tongue.

"It seems to me they're obvious," she said, with desperate carelessness. "I shouldn't think it would be necessary to make a list of them."

"It is with me," said Bill mercilessly. "I've got to be shown. Come on, now; you're an expert. We'll take them one at a time. What's the first?"

"—I wouldn't know which to put first."

"Take 'em in any order you like, then. Name the first you happen to think of."

Mary was growing pink under the freckles. Never in her life had she felt so helpless or so absurd. It was deliberate teasing, she knew; but she must not permit herself to be teased. She must have poise and self-possession; literally, she must know everything he asked, or at any rate have an answer.

"Shoot," said Bill cheerfully. "I'm all attention."

That was just the trouble, thought Mary. She was fearing now that she would fly into a temper, which would ruin everything.

"Well," she said slowly. "I would say that one of the advantages is in meeting people who are trained to be considerate of your feelings."

Nor was she ready to bite off her tongue after she said it. He had no right to treat her that way. She hoped he would understand.

And Bill did. His eyes widened for an instant and his cheeks reddened. Then he laughed.

"That one landed good and plenty," he said admiringly. "I like the way you snap your punches. Next time I'll know when it's coming. A second ago I wasn't sure whether you were going to continue the footwork or step in and hang one on me."

"What in the world—" Mary faltered in her bewilderment.

"It's just a way of apologizing," he explained. "It's what you might call an allegorical apology. I don't know just how they would say it in society, but whatever

they say goes. I'm sorry if I hurt your feelings by teasing you."

"Oh, it's all right," said Mary hastily, although she noted that he was sorry for hurting her feelings, not because he had been teasing.

"I'll try to remember after this," continued Bill. "Of course, you really stirred things up yourself by saying I ought to start right away. You don't seem to realize what a job it's going to be. I can't help you any. When I think of the amount of creative work that's falling on your shoulders I stagger in sympathy, Miss Norcross. Honestly I do. No; I'm not joshing you again: I'm serious. Where do you begin to get a guy like me into society? How do I pry in? What have I got to do to be saved?"

Mary smiled in spite of a determination to maintain a dignified view-point.

"It will not be so difficult as you think. I'm quite sure of that, Mr. Marshall. If I may suggest—"

As she stopped she was looking in the direction of the door. Bill turned and beheld his valet, standing well inside the threshold. Pete was meek and smug, his hands clasped in front of him, as he fetched an obsequious bow.

"Knock before you enter a room," said Bill sharply.

"I did, sir."

Bill knew that he lied, but the point was not worth arguing.

"I have finished with your clothes, sir."

"Well, why disturb me about it?"

"You said you were in a hurry, sir."

Pete gave the "sir" an annoying twist. Also, he had a way of fixing his gaze upon Mary, not boldly or offensively, but with a sort of mild persistence that had an even more irritating effect upon Bill Marshall.

"You said something about errands, sir, after I finished with your clothes," Pete reminded him.

"I'll talk to you about that later. You needn't wait."

But Pete lingered. The social secretary turned away and began examining a book that lay on a table. As she did so, Bill made a violent gesture to his valet. It was intended to convey a demand for instant



exit, also a threat of events to come if it was not obeyed. Pete favored him with a wide smile and a wink. Mary moved across the room to examine a picture, bringing the valet again within her range of vision. The smile vanished instantly.

"May I make a suggestion, sir?"

"Well?" Bill demanded.

"I could not help but overhear a part of the conversation, sir," said Pete. "It was about the difficulties of getting a social introduction."

Both Bill and Mary were regarding him speculatively, and each was wondering how long he had been listening. But the valet remained unabashed.

"Well?" repeated Bill ominously.

"I might say, sir, that I agree with the young lady—that it will not be so difficult as you think. If I may make bold, sir—"

Bill halted him with a sternly raised hand. He would have preferred to choke him, but valets were not commonly choked in the presence of young ladies. He could do it much better later.

"That will be all from you," barked Bill. "I do not wish any advice from the servants. Leave the room."

But Pete lingered. He even sent an appealing look in the direction of Mary, who showed obvious signs of puzzled interest in the encounter.

"Leave the room!"

Bill followed the remark with a stride. He felt both angry and ridiculous. But Pete was holding his ground with an air of sleek and pious fortitude.

"Your aunt, sir, thought there was much promise in the idea," he said.

Bill halted.

"What idea?"

"A suggestion that I made about you, sir."

Bill groaned in the depths of his soul. Now what had happened? What new devilment had been set afoot by Pete Stearns? Well, he would soon find out, but not here—not in the presence of his social secretary. He must brazen it out for the moment:

"You mean to tell me you have dared discuss my affairs with my aunt?"

"At her request, sir," answered Pete, lifting a deprecating hand. "I should not have dreamed of volunteering, sir."

Bill was almost ready to believe him; yes, in all probability it was a horrible truth. Doubtless Aunt Caroline had actually asked for his advice. She was capable of that folly since she had acquired the notion that Pete Stearns was an uplifting influence.

"Well, you won't discuss them with me," roared Bill. "Get out!"

The valet shrugged and looked sorrowful.

"Perhaps if I talked the matter over with the young lady, sir—"

Bill made a rush, but his valet was several jumps in the lead as he sped out into the hall. The pursuer stopped at the threshold and turned back into the room.

"Oh, damnation!" he cried. "Oh, why in— Say, wait a minute! Please, Miss Norcross. Awfully sorry; forgot you were here. I apologize. I didn't mean—"

But she, too, was gone. Not for the reason that Bill feared, however. She was hurrying to see Aunt Caroline. She wanted

She never needed an idea so badly.

She never needed an idea so badly in her life.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK. Don't forget this magazine is issued weekly, and that you will get the continuation of this story without waiting a month.

## A QUATRAIN

BY HELEN KORTE

BY pleasant shores I drift and dream,  
Or lightly row, and fear no foe;  
When black across the limpid stream  
Rises the reef of wo.

# Teach: Pirate De Luxe

by C.J. Cutcliffe Hyne



THE first of C. J. Cutcliffe Hyne's series of stories detailing the adventures of "Teach: Pirate De Luxe," was printed in the *ALL-STORY WEEKLY*, issue of May 22. One will appear in each of our issues throughout the summer months. While each story is complete in itself, all are concerned with the adventures of that likable blackguard, Captain Teach—descendent of the notorious pirate Blackbeard—and charming Mary Arncliffe.

## IV—THE DESERT ISLE: (1) PORTRAIT OF MISS ARNCLIFFE

THE S. S. Littondale at her best did a bare thirteen knots, and as the sea-grasses grew on her bottom, even this modest speed diminished.

At the start of her career as a pirate under Captain Teach's able leadership, she caught and sank the first four ships attacked but thereafter had as many failures as captures. Half a knot often makes all the difference in a sea fight.

So it was by these escaped ships, many of them savagely mauled by her 6-inch shells, that the Littondale's trade was advertised all over the known world.

War head-lines (thanks to the censor) were for the most part modest, as with defeat he did not wish to depress the public, and with victory he was far more anxious not to hurt the feelings of the Hun. One often imagined the censor, though of course a British subject, was born of German parentage—one, in fact, of the "indispensables" dear to the hedging politician.

Teach caught the the head-line artists on the rebound. They splashed wildly over Teach. Their gusto over the "pirate" part of him was positively ghoulish.

One paper did a brilliant scoop by starting a column: "The Pirate Day by Day." The others gnashed their teeth, and retorted with colorable imitations. Correspondents all over the world poured in rumors by cable, to the extreme detriment of the budding commercial traffic. And for the first time the press was allowed to say what it really thought about the silent navy.

One was sorry for the navy. There is a powerful lot of sea spread over the face of the globe, and to find one small 1700-ton ship on it, that was constantly changing its silhouette, was a practical impossibility.

Luckily for Captain Teach he had always shied at the camera in prepiratical days, and although there was of course a feverish search for some pictorial record of his looks, nothing of value was found. There was a



quarter-plate film snapshot of an officer-and-crew group, in which Teach was sitting, but as he was looking down at the time, the enlargement showed little beyond a top-view of his uniform cap, and the lower outline of his square dogged jaw. And also there was a caricature by a fellow-officer, but barring an impression of black cheeks and chin, it might have been anybody.

The official portrait was a built-up affair drawn from the description of a dozen acquaintances. It gave a fair general idea of the man, but it was in no degree an accurate likeness. But it drew attention to a round piece cut out of Captain Teach's left ear by Matabele bullet. It looked like a clip from a ticket-punch.

The great war was ended, and the hunt was up. Teach and his pirate crew were the outlaws of the whole world, and all available navies were on the keen lookout for him. Japanese, Italian, French, British, United States, and Brazilian war-ships quartered the seas; Liberia cabled that her armed 150-ton yacht was at the service of civilization; and the latest German Government wrote that if they were allowed a navy they would guarantee to put Teach out of action inside a fortnight.

Russia alone demanded to see what mandate the powers had for interfering with a captain whose views were so purely Bolshevik, but though the usual cranks in the United States and England wanted to back this policy, not even the labor press would give them publicity.

That enterprising person, Captain Teach, in the mean while, was attending strictly to business. Out of the sky his wireless picked up news that the Pensacola, a big cargo-carrier, chartered by the United States Government, was ordered when in sight of her French port to go into harbor only to rebunker, and then to return across the Western Ocean to New Orleans.

The war was over, and her cargo would be a drug in the European market. The Navy Department at Washington saw a use for it at home. Captain Teach saw a still different use for it among purposes of his own.

The Pensacola had sailed east during the tail end of the war-days and had been ac-

corded an escort of destroyers. But with the armistice signed, and the U-boats journeying to Scapa Flow, no convoy seemed needed for her return voyage west.

Moreover she could do her twenty-one knots to the grass-fouled Littondale's eleven point eight. Of course the Pensacola knew the notorious pirate ship Littondale by sight; the press saw to it that all the world at least knew that; so that when she saw a humpy old tramp, not in the least like the Littondale, plugging along her track, she hustled up from astern, fearing no evil.

She drew abreast, one-quarter of a mile to starboard and was surprised to receive a wig-wag message from the tramp's upper bridge which read as follows:

If you surrender immediately ship and cargo unharmed, I will give you quarter for all hands. Stop. If you fight or damage cargo I will sink the lot of you. Stop. Signed Edward Teach commanding free-trader Littondale—(Message ends.)

Simultaneously the sides of deck-houses clanged down, the muzzles of six 6-inch quick firing guns swung round till they glared unpleasantly at the particular patch of plating that covered the Pensacola's boiler-room, and three black flags ornamented with a grinning white skull and a pair of crossed marrow-bones broke out at poop-staff head and both trucks.

A little agitated officer ran to the end of the Pensacola's towering upper bridge, and semaphored wildly with his cap:

Wait minute, have sent for captain.

By way of comment one of the Littondale's guns slued slightly, altered its elevation, and sent a shell which exploded neatly under the Pensacola's forefoot, and deluged her forecastle with an upflung geyser of green water and lashing spray. This was just the sort of fancy touch that appealed to Mr. Wm. Pickles, the gunner. He was an artist at his trade.

The captain of the Pensacola came on deck, picked up the situation at a glance—and surrendered. I do not blame him. With war on, he would have stuck to his unarmed ship, and sunk with her like a man.

As it was, the war was over, and he had the lives of a crew of sixty on his con-

science, as well as the trifle of his own. So he rang off his engines, hoisted the Stars and Stripes in a half hearted sort of way, and then struck definitely.

The slow Littondale edged in nearer and lost weight, her guns still threatening.

Teach's next order was: "Line up all your people on your after-deck. All, mind. I shall shoot every one I find elsewhere."

"Now then, Mary," said the pirate as he sipped his before-dinner cocktail an hour later, "doesn't your imagination sometimes jump to a cruise by your little self in a motor-launch that can lick the wind?"

"I didn't give you leave to use my Christian name," said Mary Arneliffe.

"I know you didn't. I took it. I'm accustomed to take what I want"—he looked at her with narrowed eyes, and nodded—"all that I want, and when I want it. Keep that always at the back of your memory."

"Getting back to the other subject, that big lump of a steamer there is full of the latest thing in M. L.'s that the industrious Yanks were going to hunt the U-boats with. Those blokes on board say they can do their forty-five knots, but that's probably not true."

"What is true is that they're stout sea-keeping little craft with a fine turn of speed in anything like smooth water. I'm having one put overboard and tuned up. We'll have a spin together after dinner, you and I, if you like. It will be a ripping night, with a thread of early moon, and a whole heaven full of stars. Now, hop away and dress, or you'll be late for dinner."

Down in her stateroom as she thoughtfully fingered beautiful frocks, Mary told herself she was not cut out for the rôle of a Charlotte Corday. "But it is all right to want to kill a man like that," she added. "The trouble is what to do it with. The careful brute! If only he'd leave a pistol about."

Then she turned to her great store of pearls, neatly set out by the tidy-minded Llewelyn Jones in a row of empty cigarette tins, and made selection for the evening wear. It is no use looking dowdy even though you are going to do something desperate.

Dinner that night was a trifle hectic. She bullied Teach, and chaffed the proper Mr. Evans, who had the most correct ideas of table deportment ever worn by a professing pirate. (It was Mr. Evans who eschewed asparagus which he loved, because, look you, they made his enormous fingers so "grissy," whateffer.) She even made the dull-eyed old McDow start off into an anecdote which he had to break off abruptly half-way through.

At dessert these two were superb. McDow loved port, but he wanted it in a soda-water tumbler, and preferred it fruity. To see McDow sipping at a slim-stemmed wine-glass full of a thin wood-wine, and pretending that he was enjoying himself would have made the late Mr. Ruskin break into one of his rare smiles.

Mr. Evans was the gentleman of fashion. He wore diamonds in the front of his shirt and diamonds at the cuffs. He'd diamonds on at least four of his huge fingers. He'd a neat watch chain of diamonds that stretched as far as one could see across him. He would have made any audience blink at his splendor when he moved. His light conversation was a trifle forced perhaps, but it was undeniably genteel.

Teach let them force the pace. He seemed, as Mary Arneliffe nervously recognized, to be playing a waiting game. He allowed his two officers to carry on their performance to the verge of tediousness before—after his habit—he suggested ships' duties that needed attention, and so got rid of them.

"Nine thirty," he said, looking up at the saloon clock when they were alone. "That new M. L. is streamed astern getting watertight. At nine thirty-five the Littondale will stop, and the launch will come up to the gangway."

"Will you get a wrap? There may be dew, and you won't want to sit in the cabin on a night like this."

Mary anticipated a crew of at least four or five. She shivered to find that complete modern seaman, Captain Edward Teach, doing everything for himself.

There was no escape. The Scylla of the ship was as evil as the Charybdis of the launch. So she went on board and sat on



a skylight and watched Teach start up the engines (which were warm, and woke up into activity at once), and then jump back to the pulpitlike control position, and take hold of the wheel. The painter was cast off and the launch gathered weigh.

So there she was, alone on that hot tropic sea, with the man she loathed and feared above all others in the world. The launch dipped her tail, and lifted her bows high out of the water, and tore away toward the bright nail-paring of moon at thirty knots.

The warm salt sea air whistled past them in an exhilarating gale. The engines sang the song of exultant speed. And a million stars in the purple night twinkled at them with friendly laughter.

The stars are infinitely wise, but it takes years, not seconds, for the exact meaning of earthly happenings to reach them.

An hour out, running truly down the moon-track, then a wide listing circle and a run back by compass to the unseen Littondale—that was the evening's cruise. Teach had little enough to offer by way of conversation. Once he said: "Know anything about handling a motor-boat?"

"No," said Mary untruthfully.

"Like to learn?"

A wild idea that contained a small germ of hope jumped into the girl's head. "No," she said rather unsteadily, "I don't want to learn."

Teach looked at her thoughtfully. "I don't want my wife to be a sailor, of course, but I do wish her to know the outline of sea-faring ways."

"That's interesting, of course, but it doesn't concern me."

"Don't quibble. You know very well whom you are going to marry."

"Precisely. I am going to marry Jim Buckden."

The pirate's dark face was suddenly thrust down to the level with Mary Arncliffe. It glowed in the dim southern light with a hungry fierceness.

"You know by this time the man you are dealing with now. I am Edward Teach, pirate, neither more nor less. My family motto is: 'What I want I take,' and I have lived up to that motto, and intend to go on doing it.

"You will marry me within half an hour of getting back to the ship. I showed you the wedding ring I bought for you. I have given you every chance to give way gracefully. But as I suppose you want to be carried off in the old freebooter style, you shall have your wish.

"Mary, be sensible. You shall have everything a woman can want—lands, houses, jewels, love, power. Yes—power! This pirating business is only the first phase. Six months from now I shall have ceased to be an outlaw and—"

"Yes?" In spite of herself the girl was interested. The pirate waited. "Yes?" she said again.

"I will tell the scheme to my wife. So you will hear it in half an hour. Here we are alongside. There is a bit of a swell on. Mind don't miss the gangway. Mr. Evans, stream the launch astern again. I may want her in the morning."

Captain Teach went into the chart-house, and shut the door behind him. Mary Arncliffe, with head erect, crossed the deserted decks, and passed through the starboard companion door. What nobody noticed was, that instead of going below, she went on through the door on the port side, closed it gently behind her, and stood flattened against the side of the house invisible in a patch of friendly shadow.

She saw the launch passed astern with what seemed to her maddening—but it was really seamanlike—deliberation. A couple of hands snugged her down, and to Mary's worried mind wasted time most intolerably. Then they came in-board, hand over hand, leg over leg, up the painter.

They went forward and reported formally to the officer of the watch—discipline was very formal on this pirate ship—and disappeared. The stars that swung overhead, and the lean moon were the only things that moved.

Mary, in her delicate evening-dress of lilac-sprigged organdy muslin, stole aft, dodging into all the shadows she could find. She reached the taffrail, climbed over it, got on to the tow-line, and worked her way down it, the organdy muslin notwithstanding.

The rope sagged with her weight, and

she had a desperate struggle to haul herself over the sharp flaring bows. The muslin suffered further in the process, but when your life is the stake, you do not worry very much about these less serious matters, even though you may be a woman.

On the scrap of a fore-castle she had another terrific time casting off the tow-line from the bitts, and the job nearly beat her. But she did it, and went aft with hands sore, and bruised, and bleeding. The launch's engines, she remembered, "started easily when they were warm."

Well, they were warm now; and Mary was an experienced motor-boat woman. She knew what to do, and did it efficiently. There was a rattle-bang from the exhaust, and then a muffled roar. She slid in her clutch, grabbed at the wheel, missed the Littondale's counter by a foot, and leaped into speed.

The glittering Mr. Evans, who was the officer of the watch, caught the idea on the instant, and promptly rang Teach's improvised Active Station gongs. Gun crews poured out from below and manned and loaded their weapons.

It was Captain Teach himself who gave the order, "Hold on, all," adding *sotto voce* to himself, "I'll attend to Mary later."

Mary Arncliffe, on her part, kept the M. L.'s square counter squarely on to the broadside of the Littondale, and speeded up her engines to their fullest limit. She fled away into the open sea, she neither knew nor cared whither. She was just exulting in her escape, and for a whole hour, till the Littondale was far under the dark horizon astern, cared nothing for either direction, or final port.

But at the end of that hour, being a young woman of much cold sanity, she brought her mind to things practical, and first had an ecstatic vision of James Buckden, and then a more sober and satisfactory one—with a bit of a tear in it—of a grizzle-headed man named William Arncliffe, who worked far harder than was good for him at managing a bent-wood works at Skipton.

William, being hopelessly understaffed during the war, said that bent-wood for air-planes was a military necessity, and had

suggested that Mary should stay and help him instead of spoiling a very good head of hair, and going off to join a foolish thing called the W. A. A. C. Mary—well, she could not find a handkerchief, so she dried a leaky eye with an organdy muslin-covered elbow, and stuck to the spokes of the steering wheel at the same time.

But she took a hard look at the compass, and, after a strenuous mental calculation, slued the M. L.'s head to the westward. She knew that the adjoining continents of North and South America lay to the west, and thought it would be hard if she missed both of them. There is nothing like a nice accuracy in one's navigation at sea.

The rind of moon switched out, and Mary steered on under the glittering starlight. She used petrol extravagantly, and made the M. L. do her thirty-five knots. The rush of salted air, now that the immediate strain was over, made her desperately sleepy, but she hung on gamely to the wheel, and never varied fifteen points.

She hung on while the stars snapped out one by one, till none of them were left and a chill came up that made lilac-sprigged organdy muslin feel very inappropriate wear, and a lemon-colored dawn arrived astern which upset her color scheme entirely. That kind of yellow and lilac did not go together at all. Also she was in desperate need of a cup of tea, and, if possible, one slice of thin bread and butter.

So she slowed the M. L.'s engines till they just jogged, made fast the wheel, and searched forward and aft for provisions. She found four inches of black plug tobacco, fifteen tins of lubricating oil, and a packet of woodbines.

She breakfasted off a cigarette while the M. L., with helm imperfectly set, chased her tail in languid circles. Thereafter, being imperfectly refreshed, she applied herself once more to the wheel, and headed resolutely for the Americas.

I prefer to pass over most of the details of the ensuing day. It is unedifying to record in a memoir like this the tortures of a lady hungering and thirsting under a tropical sky of violent blue, in which was suspended a sun that seemed to drip molten brass.



A silvery flying-fish flopped on board during the afternoon. Prudence told her to eat it—raw. But Mary was imprudent at the moment, and scooped it overboard into a cool blue swell that raced alongside. But when the sun was drowned, and night came away with its sharp chill, she watched the dew-drops bead themselves on the deck planks, and was disgusting enough to lick them up with a dry tongue that once had been pink. Thereafter I fancy she must have drowsed.

A booming noise woke her. It seemed to be compounded in equal parts of thunder, heavy wind, and artillery being galloped over a pontoon bridge. Also it lay dead ahead, in fact where one or other of the Americas ought to be. Also, again, the stars were out of work, and the moon had gone off watch, and it was extremely dark.

In normal times Mary would have pulled up the M. L. in its onward stride, and like the mariner of old, have wished for the day. As it was she was too hungry, and thirsty, and tired and miserable to wish for anything except an early landing as already arranged. She even felt she was growing, if possible, more thirsty.

So instead of even slowing down, she opened up the M. L. to its fullest extent, and rushed to meet fate at thirty-nine knots.

Probably that was why she bumped over the first line of sands merely with the loss of her rudder and one propeller. The jar of this woke her very completely, and was a gentle hint that riding the whirlwind was a dangerous occupation. Also the engines were racing and said so very noisily. But something jammed in the controls, and Mary was too busy with the wheel—which she did not know to be useless—trying to get the M. L. on to her course again, to bother with such trifles as runaway engines.

So when the launch, after turning round twice, did hit the beach, she did so at a tidy speed. Being sharp-bottomed she listed promptly on to her side, tipping Mary nearly out on to the sand. Then something began to smell from inside her, and twenty seconds later she was blazing like a peace bonfire.

Mary Arncliffe, in shoes of gold brocade

and the remains of an organdy muslin dress and with about eight thousand pounds' worth of pearls on her person, looked round and surveyed America, and decided she did not like it. But one consideration crowded out all others. She was most tired.

Some kind of a square black thing stuck out of the sand. She wobbled stiffly up to it, flopped down under its leaning side, and dropped into sleep.

Day was half-grown when Mary woke, and it glared at her hotly. Seafowl, neatly dressed in sky blue and white, creaked over her with ungainly wing, and made comments to one another on her appearance.

She was stiff, and felt headachy. The air carried the acrid smells of something burning. The Western Ocean bawled at her from the beach.

She looked upward. Her neighbor of the night was a big rectangular ship's water-tank of galvanized iron. It clanged emptily when she rapped it with her knuckles. On the downhanging side there was a small manhole, with the door made fast by a couple of brass wing-nuts.

She turned these, lifted the door and peered inside. Certainly there was water in the lower half. She sniffed it, and found it smelled correctly—that is, of nothing. She tasted it from a grimy cupped hand and knew the most delicious sensation of life—a deep drink of water when you are at the far edge of thirst.

But the water, besides quenching her thirst, acted also as an appetizer. She became aware of raging hunger.

The pale-colored sea-fowl invited her to their nests. At least so it seemed to her. If they had not fluttered and squawked so much about these said untidy nests she would never have found them. At least not then.

As it was, she found a whole rookery of them among the coarse grasses on the crown of the isle, and appropriated one egg from each, so as to cause no ill-feeling.

A mere man would have bolted the contents of the eggs forthwith. But ravenous though she was, Mary could not bring herself to that. The eggs might be fresh, of course. Or again they might be the other thing.

So as the embers of the M. L. still smoldered, she raked a parcel of these together, and baked the eggs in true shipwreck style. Once hard baked, it was easy, even for a castaway, wearing pearls and three inch heels as her sole weapons, to separate the just from the unjust.

I am not fond of baked sea gull's eggs and tepid water myself, but when the alternative is no eggs, and no water, and no anything else, I vote for eggs and the something to damp them with every time. And I have tried both styles.

Mary Arncliffe, however, had a sweet tooth, and I do not think was properly grateful for mercies received. At any rate, "Oh," she said, appealing to the sky, "I'd give anything for a big box of chocolates." But as no chocolates appeared, she set about exploring the portion of America—she debated as to whether it was north or south—on to which she had fallen.

The exploration, in spite of the fact that gold-brocaded shoes with three inch heels are badly adapted for climbing loose sand, did not take long. In five minutes she got to the top of her domain, and saw that it consisted of a turtle-backed island of sand and grasses.

Ringed round it was a sea of aggressive blue, and in the sea were six other islets of much the same build. On the weather side of all of them surf creamed noisily. Over the surface of all of them sea-fowl made their mysterious demonstrations. There was no trace of either smoke or sail.

"It doesn't require much of a brain wave," said Mary to a bead-eyed herring gull who sat in the middle of a clump of sea-daisies, "to be sure that this isn't America. I must have taken the wrong turning somewhere. Perhaps, with your local knowledge, ma'am, you can tell me where I am?"

"No answer. I suppose that means you're a stranger in the place like myself? I wonder why one always does hit on a stranger? And it doesn't look as if there was any hotel.

"Perhaps you could recommend me to clean respectable lodgings suitable for a single young woman whose luggage has gone astray, and who has left her purse at home?"

No? Well, sorry to interrupt you in the middle of a busy morning. Good day.

"Now these are beautiful shoes if one had a deck or a ballroom floor to walk on, but over loose sand they're perfectly rotten. Likewise I think silk stockings can come off too. It's a long time since I went bare-legged, and—oh—it's a bit prickly among these grasses. But on desert islands people never complain about sorefootedness.

"I wish there was a cave, or a tree to build a house in. I can't sleep out in the open like a sheep."

However a tour of the islet, on the hard sand below high-water mark, did not hold out any hopes that any of the ordinary castaways' dwellings would be available. Even the amount of jetsam in the way of wreck-wood was astonishingly small. As for digging a burrow in that loose drifting sand, the idea was ridiculous.

But Mary Arncliffe was not the girl to be beaten. She reminded herself that she was a W. A. A. C. She remembered too that she was the daughter of William Arncliffe, who had brought out more inventions in the bent-wood line than any other man in Great Britain.

She was going to have a dwelling place of sorts. She declined to sleep a second time *à la mouton*.

Woman, I say it with regret, is not one of nature's architects. In fact, I fancy if the world had been peopled by women alone, there would never have been a house. Miss Mary Arncliffe's final device (after several failures) was in the form of a lean-to built against the lee-side of the leaning water-tank.

There was plenty of jetsam in the form of spars and planks above the edge of high-water if she had only known how to look for it, and the selection she did manage to discover was a remarkably bad one. The lean-to was sparred with odd and endy lengths of stick. Grass-tufts were piled above these, and as she warmed up to the work, she added more grass-tufts above the tank till its ugly galvanized sides were entirely hidden from view, and the whole domicile looked like a mere hump of sea-grass.

The doorway alone gaped. But here the



protective instinct came in. With enormous pains and care, Mary uprooted a huge clump of sea-thistle and towed it to a spot opposite her front door. If need arose, she could pull to that portal from within. And so she went to bed on a mattress of clean smelly grass that second night, vastly pleased with herself, and completely tired.

House-furnishing the next day was, for a woman, sheer luxury. She deepened the floor a foot by burrowing away the sand with her hands, and I never quite see why she did not bring the galvanized tank slithering down on the top of her head.

She stuck up three shelves to hold her store of eggs—the sures, the probables, and the possibles. She scooped a hole in the floor as a safe-deposit for her pearls, and they possibly remain there to this day, to the tune of £8,000. And between whiles she collected fuel to keep the home fires burning.

With some vague instinct of self-preservation she did not bring the cooking fire to her door, but preserved it where it had first started among the bones of the M. L., and, as I say, attended it assiduously. No vestal virgin ever looked after her sacred flame more narrowly. Mary hated the idea of raw egg. Baked hard, you could tell in a moment if they were all right. Uncooked—ugh!

So she lived on during three days pretty complacently, thirsting indeed for chocolates, but well-occupied, and not unhappy. She was certain she would be taken off the isle sooner or later. She felt that in her bones. Some sponge-gatherer, or pearl-fisher or whatever sort of sea-culturalist flourished in those latitudes was sure to come along, and though his boat would be crude and smelly, his heart was certain to be in the right place, as the hearts of rescuers always are.

The nights were the worst. The isle was full of bird-fleas, and they tickled abominably. But next morning one soon cooled down with a bath. She had some ripping swims.

Sure enough, on the late afternoon of the fourth day a rescuer did appear, but in a guise that set her heart bumping to an unpleasant beat.

Two tiny slices of upflung water gashed the saucer-rim of the horizon, and grew bigger and nearer. A slim mast, crossed by a slimmer yard, presently appeared between them. Then a pilot-house grew up, and presently a racing M. L. was slowing down outside the outer isle of surf.

At its first appearance over the further edge of the sea, Mary, by some inner instinct, had run to her burrow. As it drew nearer, she stepped inside, so as not to show against the sky line.

Presently, when it slowed down, she pulled the sea-thistle door into place, and peeped out through the wiry stalks. Sure enough, leaning over the top of the house, there was Teach, peering beachward through binoculars.

Mary pulled her door so tightly into place that the inside of her house was in darkness, and she lay there quivering. The brute! How had he smelled her out?

Hour after hour she lay in the dark, dreading, dreading, dreading. She peeped out once. Night had come, and she could see nothing. But that evil night passed away, and she peeped out again.

There was the world well lit up, and the sea twinkling. Moreover the sea was empty. There was no M. L.

But she trusted Teach little. She put out a cautious head and peeped around. Nobody was in sight. She slipped from the hut and crawled to the crown of the island. Praise be! The sea was once more desert. Then he hadn't found her after all!

A good deal shaken, she collected eggs and went down to the fire to cook.

Good Lord! What was that? An illustrated weekly turned down at a full-page portrait of "Miss Mary Arncliffe, who was kidnaped by the Pirate Teach," and a couple of parcels.

Feverishly she tore away the wrappings. Inside of the first parcel was a large box of chocolates. It was tied with lilac ribbon.

Inside the second were a large darning needle, a hank of heavy thread, and a yard-length of lilac-sprigged muslin.

There was no word on either to show where they were from or who they were for. Captain Edward Teach never had a taste for the superfluous.

# The Frigate Bird

by Lee Bolt

## PRECEDING CHAPTERS BRIEFLY RETOLD

JOHN AXSON, a young man of extraordinary strength of both body and mind, but exceedingly ugly, had been taken from his tenement home and his tubercular mother and his thieving father, as a little child, and trained and educated at the expense of James Gordon Windsor 3rd. Windsor had sent for Axson, and for the first time in his life he looked upon the face of the man to whom he owed a debt of gratitude which hurt him like hot iron. Windsor explained that he had reached the end of his financial string, and was soon to cross the border. No Windsor had ever worked, and his son, James, had been bred in the tradition of wealth and culture. But he had selected and educated Axson to supply his son with funds to continue to live in the style to which he had been accustomed. When James Gordon Windsor 4th made a profitable marriage the connection could be terminated. His benefactor explained to Axson that under the circumstances of his birth he would certainly have become a thief, and he had merely provided that he could steal with security. However, just as he himself could never knowingly have lived on stolen goods, so neither could his son. He bound Axson never to reveal to young Windsor the source of his income. But the old man desired that the two lads should live together after his death. Young Windsor, a typical spendthrift of the city, harmless and good-natured, was both attracted and repulsed by Axson. However, they made a *menage* together, and Axson was at once confronted with Windsor's need of money after his father's self-inflicted death.

Having proved his physical prowess in a boxing bout with Windsor, the latter was immensely attracted to Axson, and Axson in turn, for the first time in his life, was brought within the radius of human companionship and human friendship. Axson had to plunder, but he would plunder for the sake of another.

Regaining consciousness, Windsor reached his locker and there found a note from Axson saying he would be at the flat the next day with the money for the Leffingwell debt.

On the strength of a newspaper account of the McIntosh diamond robbery, Axson went to call at the shop of Ainsmith & Faulkner, from whose safe the gems had been stolen. The robbers had left a note signed with the mysterious signature of the XXX, the sign manual of a famous gang of thieves who, for five years, had operated without a single member falling into the clutches of the law.

The same evening Axson called at a quiet house on Fifty-Seventh Street, where he had an interview with three men, Volner, Norton, and Louis Masters. Nonplused at his demands, they nevertheless complied by handing over forty thousand dollars in cash for the McIntosh diamonds, which he gave them. Before their wonder ceased, Gordon, their confidential man, was brought in, bloody and battered.

When Windsor became anxious over his financial state, Axson advised him to go in for an heiress, promising him twenty thousand dollars for his campaign. He also advised Bacon, their new butler, that his picture was kept at the Rogues' Gallery, that he came from Volner, and carried a gun. He got Bacon's promise to be his man.

After three days absence, Windsor came to Axson and reported he had fallen desperately in love with Elizabeth Dorn. He could not press his suit because her engagement to a brilliant young man of leisure, Louis Masters, was to be announced in three hours. Mrs. Dorn had been engaged to young Masters's father, but had dropped him because he had come to the house intoxicated. All Dorn women hated drink. After his father's death, young Masters had been at home in the Dorn household, and this engagement would consummate Mrs. Dorn's lifetime ambition. The young man was crazy about the girl, but she was still indifferent to all men. Her emotions had never been aroused. Axson assured Windsor in three hours society would know the private engagement of Louis Masters and Elizabeth had been broken.

This story began in the All-Story Weekly for May 29.



Axson went at once to Masters's apartment. After drugging the man with whiskey they started for the Dorn place on Long Island. Arrived there, Axson sent his man into the house and then hid in a kind of grotto. While watching the house, a door opened into the grotto and Axson encountered a beautiful young woman, whom he felt had, at the same time as she entered his dark retreat, opened for the first time a door inside his soul.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## THE FUGITIVE.

**Y**ET when the touch came his resolution fled from him like running water; he leaped back as though an electric current had struck him. The girl, too, sprang back with a little cry. He could make out her form faintly, merely a blank outline which his imagination filled in instantly with shape and color. Also, there seemed to be a new scent other than those of the flowers of the climbing vines.

"You startled me," cried the girl. "I didn't hear you come out of the house—I—"

He could make out that she was coming a little bit nearer, as though she were peering through the darkness at him.

"Your size is tell-tale!" she added suddenly. "You're Mr. Windsor!"

"I am not," said Axson.

"I don't remember anyone else," she began, and then with quick anxiety: "Who are you?"

That subtle brain which had never failed him before was now a blank. He found himself fumbling toward the truth, blindly.

"I am a fugitive," he said.

"A fugitive!" she repeated, amazed.

It seemed to Axson, indeed, that he *was* a fugitive in the truest sense of the word; he was a fugitive from his old self.

"A fugitive from justice?" she added quickly, and she withdrew to the further side of the arbor and as far toward the entrance as she could without coming in range of his hands.

"Are you afraid?" he asked, with an infinite sadness. "Are you afraid of me?"

"I—no. A minute ago, but I think not now. But who are you? What are you?"

"I've told you."

"You're jesting! A fugitive from justice?"

"I've never jested in my life. And it is true. I am a fugitive."

She started back again. She cried:

"Why do you keep me here? What do you want?"

He drew back from the entrance.

"I will not keep you. You are quite free to go."

But at that she remained.

"What are you doing here? Why do you tell me these things?"

"Because I have to speak to some human being."

By her light, quick breathing he knew that she was terrified, yet something held her. Curiosity, perhaps.

"What has made you come—in the night—stealing up this way—do you intend—"

"What brought me here doesn't matter. But listen—that's why I stay!"

The dance music rose higher—a burst of violins singing together.

"The music?"

"I never heard it before."

"Never heard music!"

"Never to understand."

She had edged toward the entrance which he left clear. Still she lingered.

"What has driven you into the night? What is your crime?"

"A thing that was forced on me by my birth."

"Some inherited instinct? I think I know. I've heard of such things. Will you tell me what it is?"

"You are no longer afraid?"

"No. I know I'm safe. I have only to call. Besides, I'm sorry for you. Let me try to help you."

"Help me?" he said bitterly. "Nothing under heaven could help me!"

"Have you done such a terrible thing?"

"I was born terrible; I was made to be what I am."

Her voice became breathless with horror. Even through the veiling darkness which he blessed, he knew what the expression of her face must be.

"Have you done—murder?"

"Worse than murder!"

There was only her caught breath in answer.

"I have robbed a man of his chance of happiness."

"You? When?"

"This night!"

"Ah!" she cried, and then: "Let me go!"

"Am I blocking your way?"

She said with another of those quick changes of voice—and what a voice it was to the ear of Axson! "Why do you tell me these things?"

He answered with a sudden deep and strong conviction: "If I didn't tell you, I would go mad before morning."

"Is it that same passion for confession which drives men to their jailers? Then tell me what you will. I'm no longer in the least afraid. Indeed, I feel a great pity for you!"

"If I had the words to tell you," he said slowly, "I would talk at great length. But I have no way of telling you what I am."

"Yet you said you wished to speak—"

"No, only to be near a human being who did not loathe and dread me."

"Have you no friends?" she asked gently.

"None."

"Not one? No companion—even in your crimes—who will listen to you?"

"Not one who will even look me in the face!" he answered with a bitter double-meaning.

"Your own family?" she asked.

"I have none."

"No kin in the world?"

"None all my life."

"No girl who—"

"I have never spoken to a woman before—never more than six words at a time."

"And I?" she asked.

"I don't know why I speak to you. Have other men made you their confidants? Have you a power over them?"

"I think not. No."

"Yet the moment I saw your face at that door I knew I had to speak to you."

"Why?"

"I don't know. It was like a hand to me. It was like a force on my tongue. It was as if I had drunk wine and had to

speak without guard. Can you tell me what it is?"

"I don't know," she answered musing, "unless you have been long alone?"

"I was never even tempted to speak before."

She said with a sudden vibrancy: "You are young; I can tell it by your voice. You are a man of education; I can tell it by your talk. Why should you be so hopeless? I want to talk with you. I hope something can be done for you. We will go inside where there is light and—"

He broke in fiercely: "I had rather die than let you see my face!"

Once more that start; once more that catch of her voice. It went to his heart.

"Is it so widely known—and feared?" she said.

"It has never been seen without dread," he answered slowly.

"You must trust me!" she cried. "And in the end I know you *will* trust me."

"Never as far as that."

"Tell me why."

"Just now you feel some interest in me. You call it pity? I tell you, if you should see my face you would turn your back on me; you would never see me again."

"And shall I see you again, then?"

He answered with another question: "If I should come back here—in the night. Would you come out to speak with me—sometimes? Would you be brave enough for that?"

"But always at night!" she said, the horror coming back to her voice. "I want to help you. I would do what I can—but never to see your face—"

She broke off short and went on again. "I *do* wish to help you. And I think I could manage a way for you to get a new start in life. Would you try to be a different man? Would you try to lead a new life?"

"I would promise you anything," said Axson heavily. "I would promise you anything to keep you here talking. Yet I have started a new life!"

"When?"

"The moment I saw you in the door."

"I won't pretend to understand you," she said. "Explain what you mean?"



"It is hard, but I'll try. You hear the music?"

"Yes. Of course."

"Yet I assure you that before I saw you to-night music meant absolutely nothing to me."

"That's impossible. Music is part of every one."

"I tell you," he insisted, "that I never turned out of my path to listen to it!"

"And now?"

"Now it is like my own language."

"What does it tell you?"

"Lies; pleasant lies."

"Well?"

"Such lies as these: That the world is young and made for the young; that the sun is warm and yellow and bright; that birds sing because they are happy; that the stars are calm; that there is a heaven; that the rivers rush down with a purpose to the sea; that men are strong, frank, and brave; that women are beautiful and true and bring the other half of existence within the reach of men."

"The very fact that you name these things," she said, "proves that you believe them!"

"Proves that I believe them true for other men, but never true for me."

"The music tells you all these things, but none of them to take home to yourself?"

"No, not one!"

"Yet you say you have begun a new life to-night. Will you find no happiness in that?"

"Is it happiness to know that what makes other men happy will never be happiness for me? Is it happiness to yearn for what other men have and know that I can never have it? I tell you, I was almost happy before. It is not till this night that I know it was never happiness; but it is not till to-night that I have ever known a real misery."

"No misery even in your friendless life?"

"I felt no need of them. I only knew vaguely that other men have things which I have not. Otherwise I lived only for distant purposes. I went forward toward those purposes. When other men crossed my path I simply put them aside. I

crushed them and went on. Can you understand that?"

"I can understand your words," she said but I can never believe them!"

He said after a long pause: "I hope to God that you may never see a proof of what I say!"

She said suddenly: "They are calling me. I must go! But you will come again?"

"Will you see me again, this way, in the dark of the night?"

"If there is no other way—if it helps you to talk—"

"It is like water in the desert," he said with a profound seriousness. "It is like meat and bread to a hungry man."

"Then come, and I will meet you. But isn't there danger to you in showing yourself about the houses of people—if your face is so well known?"

"The night will cover me."

"I will tell you my name," she said. "It is—"

"I don't want to know it," he said. "I don't want to know anything about you. I don't want to know what people can see you when they will, or who your husband or father or brother may be. I would only hate their happiness; it would only make me more miserable. Only tell me where I may find you, and I shall come at any hour of the night you name."

"You will find me here, in this house for a time," she said. "Look up! That is my window straight above us—the lighted one, for my maid is there. Make a signal—say three short, sharp whistles—not too loud. I will try to come down to you if I am there."

"It shall be that way."

"And now before I go, is there anything I can do for you at the moment? You are not in distress from poverty? Is it not lack of money that drives you to your crimes, is it?"

"No money, from you at least, could help me."

"Then, good-night. I shall think of you many times—in kindness—before you come. Good-night. I know you will try a little harder to walk straight."

And so she left him.

"When he is off my hands," said Axson to himself, "I shall make myself clean—as she is clean!"

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE ODE ON MELANCHOLY.

HE went back to Manhattan, happy. More happy, indeed, than he had ever gone in his life. To ride in a taxi did not mate his high spirits, so he got out several blocks from Windsor's apartment to walk the rest of the distance.

A crisp night, with puffs of the wind which had brushed the mist from before the stars. It came pushing at him again and again like playful hands and the resistance delighted him. He marched along in cadence with a rhythm which played through his brain. It was the last strain of the violins which he had heard from the house of Dorn. He did not recognize it; he only knew that it carried back to him and repainted with astonishing vividness the picture of the girl, and always as she had stood there, poised, at the door, the radiance from the hall about her, shining through her.

He entered that sad and beautiful world of day-dreams, and began to see himself with her in a thousand places. She was walking now, at his side. He had to shrug his shoulders with a smile to keep from turning to look at her. Now she danced a few steps ahead of him and laughed back to him over her shoulder. He went on, increasing the length and rapidity of his step until he was fairly racing up the pavement with his silent stride. He began to hum the air which haunted him. It was a marching hymn. It was a song of victory and triumph and it carried the picture of the girl with him.

Suddenly, almost beneath his feet, there came the crowing voice of a newsboy who lingered near the mouth of a subway entrance—a shrill, sharp voice like that of the cock who announces the bright sunrise. The boy had darted out from the subway station and now his ragged arm thrust his paper under the nose of Axson. The giant halted automatically and half

turned toward the urchin. He was in a mood for giving alms and felt in his pocket for a quarter. With his fingers closing around the coin it suddenly occurred to him that it was the first act of voluntary charity which had ever graced his life. It was the influence of the girl, no doubt, running already through his mind like a river of gentleness. He tossed the coin to the boy.

But the coin struck the breast of the boy and then clanged on the pavement at his feet; and Axson, staring with a sharpened eye, saw that the boy stood as if struck into stone. His mouth had fallen agape, his wide eyes were fixed in horror upon the face of the giant, his arm was still held rigidly out with his paper. Axson, with a soft curse, strode on. He knew that the boy still remained standing with arm outstretched, gaping after the hideous phantom of the night.

He went on more slowly, and when he reached his room in the apartment he stood before a mirror. What he saw there made his head bow. He turned and sank into the chair before the fire which Bacon kept kindled there on chilly nights like this.

Yet in time his head raised again. Not that he kept any real hope. But he had closed his senses to reality. He was dreaming. He was letting the flames on the hearth twine themselves into yellow castles—golden castles. He was visioning himself in the future doing things which would be like a purification and make him worthy of some girl—some girl with sunny hair, with white, slender, transparent hands, who should be nameless. It was, perhaps, the first idle hour which Axson could remember having spent.

He glanced over to the table and saw his book lying face down. He knew the poem on which it opened; the poem over which he had sweated so many a moment. Now the lines ran across his memory—the "Ode on Melancholy":

She dwells with Beauty, Beauty that will die  
And joy whose hand is ever at his lips  
Bidding adieu.

It had been a bitter puzzle for hours of hard thinking. Now it was as clear as the mid-day. A thousand things were clear.



A thousand gates opened behind him on long vistas of his past, opened before him on long vistas of the future. He felt as if he were, indeed, new-born.

Into that half-sad, half-happy reverie broke the slamming of the entrance door of the apartment. Then loud feet clanged down the hall, a loud voice rolled into song, the door of his room opened, and James Gordon Windsor 4th burst in upon him. He was singing the "Marseillaise" in a tremendous voice, and now he hurled his gloves into one corner, his cane into another, his hat into a third. He struck John Axson heavily across the shoulders.

"You have won her?" said the big man solemnly.

"Won her?" echoed Windsor mockingly. "Do you think a man wins a girl the fourth time he sees her? Or even the tenth? Won her? No! But I went out this evening a thousand miles away from her; and I left her not inches apart. I have crossed a bridge as wide as a continent. I went out despairing. I come home rejoicing. For I have a chance, Axson. A golden, glorious chance! Axson, my good old Danish battle-raven, you croaked the truth this evening. She is no longer bound; her engagement is broken!"

"Ah?" queried Axson quietly.

"Is that all you have to say?" cried Windsor, dropping into a chair. "But if you had been there—if you had seen what happened—gad! you'd be on fire—like me! I tell you, all New York is buzzing with it now! If it's not in the papers in the morning it's because they've been bought off. Dramatic? I tell you, my blood ran cold!"

"I should like to hear the story," said Axson, and yawned, "in the morning. It is past my usual bed-time."

"When you hear this you won't go to bed at all. I'll give you the picture. Imagine the beauty and the wealth of Manhattan gathered into two great rooms. Long rooms, rather low ceilings—that Tudor sort of house, you know. Bright lights, shimmering floors, music fit for Olympus. Did I say the beauty and the wealth of Manhattan? I could almost say of the world.

"Upon my word, Axson, I've never

dreamed of such a gathering. It was epic! Oh, I've flown about a bit, but I've never soared into an atmosphere like that! Every other name was a family that went back to 1492. A splendid riot—flowers, jewels, smiles, laughter. When I went through the rooms I was drinking it in—literally. I'll swear that I was agape—drunk with it.

"And there was an undercurrent—a murmur of excitement like the flow of water under a bridge—going down to the sea. Excitement because they knew that the engagement of Elizabeth Dorn was to be announced. Every one knew that or guessed that, but not one in ten knew as much as I—the name of the lucky man. And think what luck stared him in the face? Yes, if she were a pillar of salt with the Dorn millions, she'd be a prize. And for three seasons men from three continents have been courting. No luck! Not one of them had pierced the armor. She was untouched. Not even a whisper of success for any man that had attended her. Do you wonder that New York come to look and listen?

"To look, chiefly. For by the Lord, Axson, in all the beauty that was gathered there she shone out like the moon among stars. They made the setting. She was the central stone. When I met her I could only mutter. Partly I was dazzled; partly I was sick at heart.

"The opening of the dance was delayed—unconscionably. People began to murmur louder than ever. Some one who should have been there was missing. Then a whisper went about that the missing man was the lucky fellow himself. Gad, what a sensation!

"Do you know, I had a wild thought then—remembering your prophecy that the engagement would be broken to-night—that you had gone and taken a man away by force? Yes, I was willing to believe anything.

"The music began playing continuously. Mrs. Dorn was everywhere at once. It was patent that she was trying to cover up something. Of course people fell in with her plan. Every one was trying to appear gay. But we were all eaten up with curiosity. Now this is what happened.

"Mrs. Dorn and Elizabeth were toward the latter end of the second ball-room. All at once a hush fell. It began in the first room and then it traveled toward us like a wave. Can you imagine a wave of silence? That was what it was, though. All eyes turned toward the first room. There was a whisper. It was like a last ripple crisping along a beach. Then that deadly silence again. You'd think we were waiting for the coming of a squall—all sails sheeted in, and that sort of thing, you know.

"Finally, straight down the center of the room, came Louis Masters. He was white as a sheet. I'll never forget his eyes. They were like the eyes of a sleep-walker. He stopped at the entrance of the second room and ran his eyes slowly over the crowd. Gad! I'll tell you that people stirred when those eyes touched on 'em! Pretty soon his stare fixed on the end of the room—on Mrs. Dorn and Elizabeth.

"He started straight for 'em. Not a whisper; not a sound from all those scores. It was ghastly. He was grinning, and that grin wasn't pleasant to watch. His step was as steady and regular as the step of an automaton. You'd think the fellow had been wound up and set in motion by the touching of a button.

"Well, on he came, and Mrs. Dorn stood up very white to receive him. Somebody stepped out from the side and hailed him. By the Lord, Masters passed him up as if he'd been a whiff of wind!

"That was a settler. We were prepared for anything after that. But we weren't prepared for what happened. No, sir, if the devil himself had whispered it in my ear I wouldn't have believed it! Axson, I'll give you a hundred chances and wager a cool thousand that you can't guess what that devil did!"

## CHAPTER XX.

NAPOLEONIC MRS. DORN.

"I WON'T take your bet," said Axson dryly, "but I'll tell you what he did."

"You?" cried Windsor.

"Yes. He went straight to Mrs. Dorn.

He stopped. He said: 'Twenty-eight years ago, on this night, at a time like this, you jilted my father publicly. Now, Mrs. Dorn, the tables are turned. I am through with you and through with your daughter. The devil take you all!' And having said that he turned on his heel and walked out of the room in the same manner in which he entered it!"

"You were there?" gasped Windsor in amazement.

"You have already called me a prophet," said Axson coldly.

"God in heaven! But can you imagine such a thing? Can you imagine such a thing spoken to Mrs. Dorn herself? Mrs. Dorn the dictator? Mrs. Dorn the social arbiter?"

He stopped with an oath and leaned toward Axson.

"Axson, what did you have to do with all this to-night?"

"I?"

"Answer me! By the Lord, I'll swear you were in it somewhere!"

"Because I know that? You have already admitted that all New York is buzzing with it."

Windsor sank back in his chair, viewing Axson with a puzzled scowl.

"I know it isn't possible—and yet—" then his face cleared with happiness. "No matter how it happened. The fact remains that it *did* happen. There's one possible explanation. Liquor. Men do strange things when they're under the influence of whisky. And some of the men who were close to Masters as he passed say that he was fairly embalmed in fumes—would have gone up in flames if a match had been touched to him. Well, that makes it all the worse, because I've told you what the Dorns think of booze. At any rate: there you are—the sensation of the season—the sensation of a hundred seasons!

"But even if Masters was drunk, does that explain it all? No, because it's almost inconceivable that he could have done such a thing if he hadn't been brooding on it in his sober moments for some time. Another enigma is the fact that no one has ever known Masters to touch alcohol in any form before. With his father's ex-



ample before him he had reason to let the stuff alone, poor devil!"

"Why should you pity him?" asked Axson curiously.

"Can't help it! Of course he must have been all these years a terrific cad. But he's covered it up very successfully. Passed for a gentleman everywhere, oh, absolutely! And now what a suicide he's committed! Couldn't show himself anywhere in Europe or America. The story will be everywhere. He's worse than a leper. Men will shun him. In the old days he would have had a hundred challenges in his hands by this time. As a matter of fact I heard at least half a dozen vowing to horsewhip the man in public. They're wrong. When he recovers his senses he'll pass through enough torture. Besides, there's a little touch of the dangerous about Masters. I don't think that their actions will be quite as loud as their words.

"Terrific situation for him. Terrible for the Dorns, also, of course. But it was wonderful to watch Mrs. Dorn at work—positively Napoleonic. There she was in the view of all New York—routed—the work and plans and hopes of a lifetime tumbling about her ears. She rose to the occasion. She charged at the critical moment. Yes, Axson, while Masters was still stalking away with his mechanical stride—while he was still in full view—while everyone was dumb with a sort of horror, Mrs. Dorn turned to a man beside her and said in a voice perfectly steady and just loud enough to be heard a sufficient distance: 'I am very glad that we are gentlemen and ladies together, to-night!'

"A positively great utterance, Axson! She should have been a general in the old days. Can you imagine anything more frank and direct and yet more delicate than that? It wasn't an appeal. It wasn't an apology. But it suddenly put every one on his mettle—men and women. I suppose there was a score of women in that place who would have rejoiced at the fall of Mrs. Dorn as much as England rejoiced over the fall of Bonaparte. But after they heard of the thing she had said they were swept off their feet. They came up to her one by one. I could mark them as they came

—a smile—a word—a pressure of the hand. And all the time talking about nothing.

"But it was plain that women who grudged her precedence five minutes before were glad to be her humble allies now. I admire her from the top of my head to the soles of my shoes. I'd let her walk over me to keep from mud.

"Of course Elizabeth didn't bear up quite as well as her mother. Not that the blow was a very direct one at her. The world knew that it was not a love match; it was rather a family alliance planned and arranged by her mother. That was why Mrs. Dorn received the direct shock. But still the embarrassment was sufficiently great for Elizabeth. I watched her and I saw her go perfectly white. Then she disappeared from the room. You can imagine that my heart went with her, Axson!"

"She went away?" said Axson with a sudden interest.

"Do you see anything remarkable in that?"

"Where did she go?" asked Axson, his voice hard.

"Haven't the least idea. Probably went back to her room."

"Ah," murmured Axson, with an accent closely akin to relief.

"However," said Windsor, "she has some of her mother's fighting blood. A few generations of breeding tell, Axson. Before very long she was back in the midst of things. I should say, she was back, and the center of things. She made the rest look like water colors beside oils.

"Just as fresh and steady and poised as ever. Floated about, smiling and laughing and happy, to all appearances. In fact, she seemed to be glad to be free from some burden. I suppose she was eating her heart out all the time, but no one would have guessed it. Her poise was almost as much admired as her mother's. Between them, they completely won the field.

"In the mean time I was on fire, you can imagine. But what the devil, Axson—are you asleep?"

"I?" queried Axson, rubbing his eyes. "No, no. Go on with your tale."

"You have to listen. Have to tell someone about it, old man! I was saying that

I was on fire when I saw that the field was an open one again, with Masters dead and buried. For that matter, every young fellow there was on fire, also. But here's the triumph of superior tactics, Axson. They concentrated on Miss Dorn. I concentrated on her mother. And by the Lord, my chance came before any of theirs. In half an hour I was dancing with her. Gad, I can remember everything she said. I forget how the subject came up, but it developed that she is very interested in criminology—has made a hobby of it, in fact. She asked my opinion of the strength of inherited criminal tendencies—

"Ah!" cried Axson, starting violently in his chair. "She spoke of that?"

"Are you interested in the same thing, Axson?"

Axson shaded his ugly, sphinx-like face with one hand.

"Is she a slender girl?" he asked. "With copper-colored hair?"

"Yes, I've described her to you before."

"With a light," said Axson in a strange voice, "with a light which seems to shine through her?"

"Did I describe her to you like that?" mused Windsor. "I suppose I may have said that. Rather far fetched, but rather beautiful, too. Damned if it isn't!"

"She seemed—attracted by you?" asked Axson after a long pause.

"Attracted?" answered Windsor seriously. "I suppose it's caddish to say that she was. But to be frank, Axson, I think that she was—decidedly. At least, she sat out a dance with me talking about criminology. I happened to know a bit about it, you see. But then, why should a girl like that be particularly interested in criminology? No, I think it's only fair to suppose that she was merely trying to entertain me by letting me talk. That's an old dodge, you know!"

"I suppose so," said Axson. "Very old!"

"But you're half asleep. Popping your eyes open. Good-night, Axson. More of this in the morning."

Axson, however, returned no answer. He remained for a long time watching the fire with sightless eyes, and at last he buried

his face in his hands. He was thinking of the newsboy, and the transfixed face of horror.

## CHAPTER XXI.

MARTHA PERCE.

ACCORDING to Martha Perce there were three classes in society: those who did not know enough to ask questions, those who knew too much to ask questions, and those who asked questions.

At her place of residence, she chose the first class, she consorted with the second class, and she loathed the third above all things.

Her home was a modest little three-story affair hardly twenty feet across the front, and it was huddled into a block of houses exactly three stories high with fronts hardly twenty feet across. There are numerous districts like these in Manhattan. They are islands of mid-Victorianism in the ocean of the twentieth century. Martha Perce was fond of saying that she was more secure in her block than if she had lived in a deaf and dumb asylum. In fact, she was safer. For the deaf and dumb are suspicious, but the people of Martha's old-fashioned block saw just enough to think that they saw everything.

For her part, Martha would have done anything rather than hurt the feelings of these good folk. When she sallied forth intent on spoil she never harried their slumberous ranks. She was far too good a sport to take such humble picking, for one thing; for the other, she liked excitement more than she liked profit. Which was the only reason, perhaps, that she did not rise into the select circle of the XXX society. A little less heart and a little more brain; a little less blood and a little more bone and Martha, even if she were a woman, would have set at the council table along with the illustrious three. As it was, she was the most valued and trusted of all their cohorts.

She was a willing worker; she did what was laid before her and a good deal more besides. In return she only asked that she be let alone in her slumbering street. Ac-



cordingly she sat up in bed with an angry murmur when the door-bell rang at three o'clock in the morning. She knew at once that it was an emissary from the XXX. Who else could possibly be awake and in that street at that time? She had not reached her own room until two, and at that hour the silence of death reigned in the street.

Her first impulse was to rush down to the door before the maid reached it; her second was to stay in bed, remembering that the maid was not sleeping in that night. She would stay in her bed and let them ring and go home. What right had they to break the covenant in this manner?

However, she had hardly leaned back on the pillows when she was sitting bolt erect in her bed again, listening. There are ways and ways of ringing door-bells, and this was a most peculiar one. Long rings and short ones interspersed and they spelled a word in telegraphic code: "E-R-S M-A-S-T-E-R-S-M-A-S-T-E-R—"

It was beginning the fourth repetition before she put the monotonous sounds together and spelled: "Masters!"

At that, as if a bugle had sounded reveille in the ear of a soldier, she leaped out of bed, sprang into slippers and a dressing-gown, flashed on a light and paused before the mirror to sweep her hair into some order and squint critically at the face which looked quizzically back to her. A strange and beautiful face, olive, almost sallow in complexion and a little too thin, with enormous purple shadows around the eyes. But the size of the night-black eyes, the perfect curves of the red lips and the lovely rounded lines of the throat, redeemed both sallowness and shadows.

Down the hall and down the narrow stairs she fled on swift and softly padding feet and wrenched the door open. By the dim light of the hall-lamp which she had switched on in passing, she saw Masters standing erect and patient before the entrance. He was in evening clothes, with top hat, and a black neck cloth which made the natural pallor of his face deadly.

"Louis!" she stammered, "Louis! What on earth—Come in!"

He came without a word and, still silent,

stood motionless in the hall while she closed the door behind him.

"What is it?" she asked.

He did not answer. She stepped closer, and peering under the shadow of his hat she saw that his face was stirring—the eyes unearthly bright, the lips quivering. Some inner spasm tormented him. It was typical of Martha that when she became really excited her outward manner was instantly schooled to perfect quiet. Without a word she took his hat, his coat, his neck cloth, his gloves.

"Come this way," she said calmly, and led him into a living-room, long, narrow, filled with a thousand feminine trinkets of a fashion fifty years dead in most of the world.

She gave him time by gathering together the dying embers of the hearth and placing on them some light tinder which soon sent up a cheerful blaze. At last she turned to Masters. The one table lamp only half illumined the room, but by the flare from the hearth she could make out his face clearly. He looked like a man who had passed through some terrific catastrophe. He looked like a sick man who has successfully withstood the crisis of his disease but lingers still on the verge of dissolution. Before the girl's scrutiny Masters flung up a shaking hand and screened his eyes.

"Put it out!" he commanded hoarsely. "Put out that damned fire, Martha!"

She obeyed this gruff demand without the slightest hesitation, as though it had been the most courteous and graceful of social requests. When the embers were scattered and the light flickering out she turned again.

She found Masters had sunk into an easy chair, one arm falling over the side of it and trailing toward the floor. His feet lay crookedly before the chair; his whole body sagged in a way that exaggerate the man's frailty. It was physical exhaustion, collapse. But the restless fires of the eye denied the state of the body. Physically he might be at the point of crumbling; mentally he was strong as steel. There was something of sympathy in the girl as she watched him. There was more of a tremendous, subdued excitement.

He said abruptly: "Ask questions. That's the best way to get at it."

"Something I never do," she answered. "You ought to know that, Louis!"

He went on in the same half-defiant, half-brutal way: "Well, did you expect me to come to you to-night?"

"I expected," said Martha, and her voice shook a little—"I expected that to-night you'd become engaged to—to that other girl. Well?"

"Well, I'm not!"

She allowed herself to slip into a chair facing him. With a devouring hunger her eyes were on the pallid, handsome face.

He said: "I jilted her—openly—publicly. The world was there and saw and heard me!"

The spasm passed across his face more violently.

"In the name of heaven, why, Louis?"

"Do you ask me that? Because of you, Martha!"

She was suddenly on her knees beside his chair. She had his lifeless hands in hers and was nursing them against the warmth of her breast.

"Louis, Louis, Louis!" she repeated over and over.

"I told you all the time that I was only playing at a game. But you wouldn't believe me, Martha."

"Louis, dear Louis! Will you forgive me?"

"You see I'm here," he answered dryly. And then, by an effort which must have cost him fearfully, he managed to smile down to her upturned face. She dropped her head upon his knee with a faint, choking sob.

He could speak more calmly and rapidly now that her face was averted from his.

"I'll tell you about it. You've heard how her mother jilted my father? I went there to-night. All the world was there before me. I walked straight through the rooms and went to Mrs. Dorn. I told her so that they could all hear that I was through with her and her daughter—that I had paid my father's debt. Then I turned and left the place. Not a soul spoke while I was coming or going. The Dorns are ruined."

He lifted his head; his whole body grew rigid, and then relaxed with a shudder. "They *must* be ruined!"

"They'll never be able to look up again!" she cried, and now she started to her feet, laughing, with tears of passionate happiness behind the laughter.

"And now you and I again—like the old days, Louis?"

"Like the old days," he nodded.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE SOLUTION.

"PARTNERS?" she asked.

"Partners," said Masters.

"And we begin?"

"Now!"

"Whatever you say!" she answered with hurried eagerness and in a rather low voice. "I will never oppose you again, Louis. I'll never badger you with suspicions! But how"—she paused, appalled by her thought—"how did you ever nerve yourself to that stunt, Louis?"

"Not many men would have had the courage to do it, eh?" he queried with singular quiet, the quiet of lifelessness.

"Why, they'll hate you, Louis!"

"I know it. God, how well I know it! Man, woman, and child, they'll never look at me again. I'm anathema! They're done with me. The mention of my name is like the touch of a leper's hand. I've committed the last, the cardinal sin. I've insulted a woman. And I've done it before witnesses."

His voice rang suddenly with terrible pain, though it was not raised: "I could go to the ends of the earth and I'd be found out. I'd be shunned. I can never again talk to a clean-handed man or a straight-eyed woman—"

"Louis!" she cried with a passion as great as his own.

He seemed to take himself in hand with a sort of muscular effort.

"Except you, Martha!"

She slipped up to him, framed his face between her hands, and tilted it until the dim light struck somewhat more fully on it and she scanned it fiercely.

"I can never read you," she muttered,



stepping back again. "I can never get past those yellow-brown eyes of yours. But if you're lying to me again, Louis—if you're trying to use me—"

She made a significant pause.

"I had rather," said Masters seriously, "toy with a tigress than play with you with double meanings, Martha."

"I think you had," she said doubtfully.

"But—I'll ask no more questions. You've come for something in particular to-night. Don't say no."

"For you."

"Don't lie to me. Something more than me. Something that's burning you up. What do you want?"

"A life," said Masters.

"Man or woman?"

"Man."

"A fine start," said Martha Perce. "You need me?"

"I do."

"Against a single man?"

And with a world of bitterness Masters admitted: "One man. He's stronger than I."

"What's his name?"

"Axson."

"Oh!" said Martha Perce softly, and she slipped back into her chair. Her dark eyes fixed thoughtfully on Masters.

"What's he done to you?"

"You know the story of the diamonds?"

"Ancient history."

"Isn't that enough?"

"I thought Bacon was taking care of him?"

"Ten Bacons," said Masters seriously, "would never be a danger to that—devil! That incarnate fiend!"

"But one woman would?"

"One woman was enough to undo Samson. He must have one weak side. No man has been able to find one. A woman will."

"But what's he done—directly to you?"

"Something you wouldn't believe if I swore it on a Bible," said Masters. "Something I can't believe myself, hardly. I feel as if I'd dreamed it."

"Well?"

"When I have him in my hands—when he's at my mercy—then I'll tell you."

"Plain killing won't do for him?"

"If he lived to be a thousand," said Masters, "and every day of the thousand years I could do what I would with him, he would never live long enough to pay back what he's done to me. But what I can I'm going to wring out of him—drop by drop!"

"Louis!" she said with ominous calm, "the girl has something to do with this. He's got between you and the girl in some way. Answer me."

"I thought," he said coldly, "that you were to ask no more questions?"

She fought out a silent struggle with herself.

Then: "I won't. Not another question."

She settled herself in her chair and took a cigarette from the table near her.

"Now let's talk business."

She lighted the cigarette, and inhaled a cloud of the smoke.

"Where do I find him?"

"I'll give you his address. He lives with a chap named James Gordon Windsor 4th. How he ever came to be taken in by Windsor is one of the mysteries about him. But it's not the only mystery or the most important one."

"They say that his face is ugly enough to be a mystery," smiled Martha Perce.

"It is. It's like a glimpse at old Egypt. It turns one's blood cold to look at him. When you meet him, Martha, you be prepared to see the devil—and laugh at him!"

"Well, what's the scheme?"

"You've got to reach him directly, and at once."

"That names the riddle. It doesn't come near solving it."

"Don't hurry me. I have to think out a way."

"Wouldn't be possible to use force on him? Couldn't collect a number of the boys and simply tie him up and cart him away?"

"Force?" said Masters. "Well, you haven't seen him. That's why you say that. Neither did you see Gordon after Axson was through with him. He was smashed; pounded; broken to a pulp. His leg was broken just below the hip. And Axson did all that with his bare hands!"

The girl made a grimace of horror.

"It isn't possible!" she gasped. "Gordon is a giant!"

"Nothing about him is possible," scowled Masters. "He came out of nothing. He trailed the triple X to headquarters within five hours, after we'd kept the police blind for five years. But why didn't he turn over the information to the police after he had it? And we know that he didn't do that!"

"Because he wants to squeeze the triple X for money. That's why!"

"He could have got ten times what he asked us for the diamonds he got from the safe," said Masters. "No. He wants money, but money isn't the only thing he wants."

"Well, what else?"

"I don't know. I'm trying to feel my way to the truth about him."

"Nonsense!" murmured the girl. "Why not open his window some night and toss a gas-bomb in while he's in bed? That'll make him helpless enough!"

"It wouldn't work," said Masters quietly. "I don't know why it wouldn't work. I know it's been done scores of times before, but something inside me tells me that it's impossible to touch this man through any physical means. We've got to use something else."

"Woman, as you said before?"

"Exactly. But how will you get to him?"

"Meet him in society. I can do the social stunt if I have to, though you know how I hate the game. I could even mix with Windsor's crowd in a pinch."

"He doesn't go with Windsor's crowd. I tell you, a sight of his face would empty the most courageous drawing-room in New York. He stays at home."

"Then I'll meet him when he's out walking on the street. That's always possible."

"You've missed my point," said Masters. "He isn't the sort you can flag with a look and make a fool of. Not a bit of it. Personally, I don't think he's ever had a thing to do with women. They're a blank to him."

"Then what in heaven's name is the solution?" she cried in exasperation.

"Suppose an appeal were made to his pity?" suggested Masters cautiously. "I

wonder what the result would be if some one won his pity?"

"And then stab him in the back?" she asked rather in disgust.

"I have it!" he cried suddenly. "It's an old game, but it's always a good one when a master works it! Martha, listen to me!"

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### FRANKNESS.

INTO the solemn studies of Axson the incursions of Windsor came like bursts of fresh air from the outer world. They took the form of reports, of his progress with Elizabeth Dorn. Good reports, as a rule.

Of the little host who stormed the Dorn mansion after the annihilation of Louis Masters, the big form of handsome James Windsor moved in the first and foremost rank. He rode, he dined, he danced with her. And all went merry as a song.

But on this night, when the door slammed, and the step went down the hall, Axson laid aside his book with a sigh of resignation. He could tell by the heaviness of that slam, by the dull thudding of the heels against the hall-floor, that there was ill-tidings. And he was prepared for the worst.

He had long ago—hours that were ages—given up the reality of Elizabeth Dorn for his day-dreams of her. As far as he was concerned she was two separate entities. To one of them he made no claim. The other was the property of his imaginings: she floated before him day and night. The flesh and blood Elizabeth Dorn was to be the property of James Gordon Windsor. Since she was lost to him inevitably, it was far better that she should go to a man over whom he would have some control. In time she might even learn to conquer that which man, woman, and child felt at the sight of his face an unutterable horror. She might tolerate his frequent presence. With no other man could he hope so much. Moreover, the consummation of this marriage would lift the burden of Windsor's support from his hands. He would be a free man—



free to live a clean life worthy of honor even from Elizabeth Dorn.

It was for that reason that he sat back in his chair awaiting the coming of Windsor with an odd mixture of disgust and patience and eagerness. The door opened, Windsor came in, white with suffering, and stood like a statue before the gloomy giant.

"It's over," he said faintly. "And I'm done for."

"I knew," said Axson, "as soon as the door closed behind you, that it was over. Tell me about it and we will start it again."

Even this cool irony did not affect Windsor. He slumped into a chair, speechless at first, but as his grief gathered head he broke out at last: "The game was in my hands. I had all the honor cards. Then I threw them away! Will you believe it, Axson?"

"I will," said Axson.

"It was the garden," said Windsor, unheeding of this unflattering admission. "It was the garden—the flowers—the damned starlight that undid me. I was playing a cool game—just interested enough—not too much. Suddenly a wave picked me up and swept me out to sea. That's all."

"Say it in English," suggested Axson.

"I've told you before that I stood ace-high. It wasn't a lie," said Windsor. "I'm sure it wasn't. She liked me. Liked me a lot more than she did the rest of the lot. She almost said that much."

"It wasn't that I was blind. I knew perfectly well all the time that I would have to work carefully. I knew that a single mistake would finish the game. I knew I dared not cut too deep or I'd spoil the statue. But to-night—"

He stopped with a groan.

"To-night we walked outside the house. We'd dined together. It was faint starlight. I could make out just a hint of her face. Just an outline. The rest of it I had to draw from my imagination."

"I think I know what you mean," murmured Axson.

"Do you? But not all. We were walking slowly together. She was only inches away. Now and then her mantle came over my shoulder. There was just enough wind to lift it. Sometimes it touched on my

face. Silky and soft, you know. My heart began to beat like a trip-hammer. Gad! I felt myself going and the thought of how near I was to the end of my rope sobered me like a plunge in cold water.

"For another minute I was all right. Then the scents of the flowers came at me. The sound of her voice was—well, it acted like wine on me. Made me drunk, by the Lord! Then, as I was saying, a wave came from behind, picked me up, threw me forward. I was blind in it—crazy."

"I came to myself with a small, cold voice, saying at my ear: 'I wish you would let me go!'"

"Then I looked down and found that she was in my arms. God knows what I had said. Told her I loved her, I suppose. Told her I was mad about her, I suppose. Kissed her, I know."

"Well, my arms went limp. She stepped away from me. Of course I tried to apologize, but the words wouldn't come. I simply stood still like a beaten dog. That was the way I felt. I wanted to die. I think I asked her if she was too angry to ever forgive me."

"'No,' she said, 'I'm not angry, and of course I forgive you. But you've been so very frank, Mr. Windsor, that I'm going to be frank as well. A moment ago I liked you extremely. Now it's different, you see. Sometime I hope you will come again and that we will be very good friends. But now I'll have to ask you to leave me. You'll understand? And you won't come again, will you? Not till I send for you. I hope that will be soon. And when I ask you to come I hope you'll come and be willing to forget what has happened—as I shall try to forget.'"

"Was there any answer to that? I tried to find one, but I couldn't. I simply stood there dumb. And finally I came away without a word. Came back here."

He fished with a mirthless laugh: "So you see, Axson, that I've ruined everything."

The eyes of Axson were far away.

"There is some good in the evil," he said at last. "At least you've done enough to pick you out of the crowd in her eyes."

"Yes," said Windsor bitterly. "I've

done enough to brand myself as a cad forever in her eyes. There's not the slightest doubt of that."

The somber giant asked with what might have been wistfulness in another man: "Does it anger a girl when a man tells her that he loves her?"

Windsor could not keep back his laughter. It stopped shortly and janglingly enough.

"That depends on the girl, I suppose and the circumstances—but for a man who's almost a stranger—gad, Axson, what a child you are in some ways not to see what a hole I've got into! For a stranger to propose marriage to a girl he's been with about five or six times—it makes me cold to think of it! Thank God that she's too fine to laugh at me!"

"Could you find nothing to say to justify yourself?"

"Silence was the best thing I could have," said Windsor. "My best card was to leave everything to her good nature."

"I think," sighed Axson, "that I should have found something to say. It isn't dishonorable for a man to tell a woman that he loves her, you say? Not at times?"

"At times, of course not. Why, Axson, even a child knows that, but—"

"I don't think she quite understood you," said Axson. "You didn't explain how the stars and the wind and the flowers were all parts of what you did? Don't you think that might have made some difference to her?"

"Now, what the devil do you mean by that?" asked Windsor.

"I know nothing about women," admitted Axson, "but I think that I should have said something to that general effect. But it isn't too late even now!"

"Do you actually want me to go back and try to see her now and conduct a post-mortem examination or what and why and how?"

"She won't see you. But don't you suppose she might read a letter you wrote to her?"

"A letter? Nonsense! It's bad enough to make a cad of one's self. It's nearly as bad to be an ass. No, I won't write a letter."

"I think," said Axson slowly, "that you will."

"Eh?"

"It's your one possible hold on her. Are you willing to give her up without a last effort?"

"I will try to forget her. That's the best way!"

"Is it possible," cried Axson with a sort of horror that made his voice boom through the apartment, "is it possible that you could forget her? No, no, Windsor. You'll write the letter. You'll explain how that wave picked you up—how you were blinded and dazed. I think she'll read your letter—and send for you."

"I wonder!" mused Windsor.

"Here's paper and pen and ink. We'll work it out together."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE LETTER.

**H**E picked up the writing materials and began to work, rapidly, freely.

"What are you doing?" asked Windsor.

"I'm writing down the things you told me," said Axson calmly. "Don't interrupt!"

For an hour he worked. His pen moved more and more slowly. Great thoughts formed in his brain, flared into pictures, and then changed gradually into words. The scene he painted was the scene of Windsor and Elizabeth Dorn in the garden. The spirit behind it was the spirit of Axson. A terrible and resistless yearning, the reaching of a starved man for food, of the blind man for light, of the poet of beauty; it was a mighty desire, the sharper because of its hopelessness. What had been the simple, sudden impulse of Windsor became through the pen of Axson the wild outburst of a damned soul who sees the gates of heaven swing wide, invite him in, and then close together in his face.

For the girl of Axson's day-dreams was gone, and in her place there was the reality of flesh and blood, who was hopelessly lost to him forever. It was a farewell, not an appeal. It was a statement of love rather



than a plea. It was filled with a grim defiance of fate. It stormed and rang.

And yet, all in short compass. Each word stood by itself like a sword of fire.

At length he thrust the paper across the table to Windsor, silently. As the other read he glanced up once, in astonishment, to Axson. Then he went on to the end, and when he reached it he sprang up with a cry. He rose and leaned across the table to face his solemn-faced guest.

"How in the name of God!" he cried. "How in the name of all that's sacred did *you* come to write this?"

And he searched the face of Axson. It seemed to him at first that the keen eyes of the giant faltered under his glance. Not that they actually wavered; but they seemed about to waver. He felt as if the secret in the next instant would be his. But that instant's change must have been merely some tricky play of the shadows from the hearth. The next moment the face of the sphinx could not have more securely guarded what lay within.

"Axson, what is it? What's happened to you?"

The big man leaned back in his chair and looked up to Windsor with something of a sneer.

"Have I written *anything*," he said, "which didn't actually happen to you in the garden?"

"The facts are mine," admitted Windsor, "but the spirit, man, the spirit! In a thousand years I could never have turned out that last sentence!"

"You should study rhetoric," answered Axson coldly.

Windsor started.

"You can't shunt me off," he said in a more determined voice. "Yesterday you couldn't read Keats. Now you *write* Keats. How does it happen?"

"It is always easy," responded Axson, "to play a part. That is all the letter is. I hope it may help you."

"If I had the courage to send it," said Windsor, "it would bring me back to her within an hour after she reads it. But the letter is yours, not mine. Can I send her another man's pleadings?"

"Pleadings?" cried Axson. "Do you call

that a pleading? It's the statement of a case, that's all."

"A statement?" said Windsor. "I tell you, man, this is poetry! If she has a heart at all it will set her on fire! And yet I wonder!" His voice changed and he regarded Axson with a mixture of awe and cold curiosity. "They say that the great Bernhardt feels nothing when she is on the stage. She plays a part, she *thinks* the right emotion, and all the time she has a cold, critical eye on the audience, watching the effect of what she does upon them. Are you like that, Axson? A moment ago I thought you were genuinely moved. Now it seems to me as if you were never moved in your life!"

He paused.

"I have no desire," said the giant, "to talk about myself. There is the letter. Will you use it, or are you to waste it?"

"May I consider it," mused Windsor, "as a mere interpretation? Yet, somehow, I feel as if I were stealing fire from heaven, if I were to use this letter."

"However," said Axson, watching and judging, "you will use it. You've already made up your mind."

"I suppose I have," admitted Windsor. "For this is the real spark, and if there is any tinder in her it will set her afire. Gad, man, think of seeing her excited, roused, with a light in her eyes and that queer touch in her voice that comes there when a woman—"

He stopped and struck his hands together.

"But I am playing a low part. I have used your money, Axson, for a score of little gifts to her."

"You can pay it back after the wedding."

"I will be using your words to persuade her."

"If you make her happy, Windsor, you will be repaying more than words."

"Why, that sounds like a bit of fine sentiment. What do you mean by it, Axson?"

"I am sure," said Axson coldly, "that *she* would understand."

"Stolen fire!" muttered Windsor. "But it shall be put to a good use. If I can make her happy—yes, that will justify everything. Good night, Axson. In a couple of days

I'll know better how to thank you. This will either make or break."

"You shall consider me a lawyer," said Axson. "I give you advice. If you win you can think about rewards afterwards."

## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE PLANT.

IT was later, how much later he could not guess, when Axson awoke in his bed. He roused from the soundest sleep to keenly attuned wakefulness. Before him hung the thick blanket of the dark; there was not a sound; yet he knew as if his eyes bore witness that there was another person in the room.

He had a mysterious sense of coolness about his face, as if from a draught that might have followed the opening of the door into the hall; this touch of coolness was the only actual warning. In all men the senses are sharpened in the darkness and in the night; in the oblivion of the eyes the tactual and aural powers are accentuated. In Axson this change was exaggerated to an almost supernatural degree.

He had no sooner wakened than he began to move, rapidly, stealthily, from his bed.

There is hardly a thing in the use of man which gives out a greater number of odd and unexpected noises than a bed. Any movement of a body upon it sends out a squeak of springs, or a rustle of the coverings, or the groan of the woodwork. Yet Axson succeeded in getting out of bed noiselessly. Not that he moved very slowly, but it was all done so gradually, the weight was lifted from the springs, the feet shifted to the floor, the clothes were laid back all so softly that not a whisper, not a creak, not a rustle announced his progress.

Once erect there was hardly a lesser problem before him; he had to pass to the side of the room and reach the electric light, and all this must be soundless. First he slipped his automatic from under his pillow and then glided to the wall nearest the bed. Along this wall, in turn, he slipped; for the boards nearest a wall are less apt to yield and creak than the flooring nearest the center of a room.

An instant later the switch snapped under his hand and the room flooded with light.

What he saw was the figure of a woman in the very act of stealing toward the foot of his bed, a revolver poised shoulder high in her right hand, a flashlight ready for use in the left. She whirled with a little snarling cry, and then, facing the steady muzzle of Axson's gun, she tossed her own onto the bed.

"Take off your mask," said Axson.

She obeyed. He found himself looking into eyes as dark as his own, marked with deep shadows; and a face at once pale and sallow.

"Now sit over here."

She obeyed. Her wide eyes were fixed upon him with a sort of dull despair. Stupid eyes, they seemed. She was lost in apathy.

"Masters sent you?" asked Axson.

At that her dull quiet was broken by a shudder. She looked upon the pajama-clad monster with terror, but instantly that terror faded into the apathetic gloom again.

"It's he," she replied.

She had changed even her voice from the musical, pleasant voice of Martha Perce. These tones came heavily, harshly; the voice of one who is broken with misery. Hopeless as those supernally wide eyes.

"He sent a woman," said Axson softly and aloud, "to kill me. A woman! Who are you?"

"That's nothin' to you," answered the girl.

"You'd rather talk to the police?"

She was silent; she looked past him.

"Very well."

He turned away, and the instant his back was turned her face lighted; a fire came in her eyes. It was like a glimpse at another woman; it was like the removal of a mask. A word came trembling to her lips as his hand touched the door.

But it was quite apparent that Axson was merely bluffing. He had no intention of leaving the room. At the door he whirled again on her; but swift though his move was, her expression had changed back to its original. Her mouth was slightly opened, now. The girl looked half-witted.

"They've brought you to the point where



you'd rather face the police than talk about the Triple X?" asked Axson.

She made an answer. He might have been empty air.

"Very well," said Axson. "You can go. And tell Masters that I'm surprised. I never dreamed that he'd send a hireling to knife me in the back. That would never repay him for what I've done to him. Tell him I think very little of him, indeed."

She rose, slowly. It seemed that her mission had failed, and the face of a less consummate actress than Martha Perce would have shown the disappointment. Her mask, however, was perfect. She rose; she went straight for the door with eyes that still looked past the giant. In the center of the room her step faltered. She sagged a little to one side and her hand flew up to her heart; but, as if she mastered a consummate agony, she set her teeth in her lower lip and continued toward the door. But Axson closed it in her face.

"Go back to your chair," he commanded.

She merely stared at him.

"Go back," he repeated.

She went like an automaton.

Once more she was seated, her hands folded passive in her lap, the dull eyes upon the distance.

"What is it?" asked Axson with a sudden gentleness in his voice: "Hunger, sorrow, or—dope?"

Her glance grew slowly aware of him.

"What's it mean to you? Eh?"

He approached her. He laid a large hand on her forehead and pushed her head back until she was looking squarely up at him; then he pulled down the lower eyelid of both eyes.

"It isn't dope," pronounced Axson.

He took her limp hand and pushed back the sleeve, examining the smooth, round wrist.

"It isn't hunger," said Axson.

Now his glance grew positively kindly.

"It's sorrow?" he questioned.

"What d'you know," she said huskily, "about sorrow?"

"It *is* sorrow!" pronounced Axson.

He turned away to draw up a chair, and once more there was the sudden change of

the girl's expression when his back was toward her. This time it was triumph, triumph which had not quite died from her eyes when he faced her again, pulling up the chair.

"Ah," he said, as he settled into it, facing her. "When my back was turned you wished for your gun again, eh? Well, tell me your story."

She remained stupidly silent. But her reserve seemed to be breaking, like the gradual thawing of ice. There was unsteadiness of both lips and eyes.

"It will be much better for you," said Axson.

He looked curiously at her.

"You will be perhaps surprised to hear that you are the first person in the world I have ever pitied. Will you talk to me?"

The thawing was complete; the water broke its bounds; she burst into tears.

There was a great mystery behind it, if John Axson had known, but no matter how she managed, real tears now coursed down the cheeks of Martha Perce, and her face was convulsed for the instant in which it was visible before she buried it in her hands.

It troubled John Axson. He rose. He hurried across the room and back again. He touched her shoulder. He implored her to stop. He ordered. He entreated. But the flood gates, apparently, were opened. Then laughter came, wild and shrill, an hysteria.

When that passed, it left her weak and trembling, and her eyes were darting from side to side like the eyes of a scared wild animal.

It was not all acting. It was very largely real relief. The crisis had come; she had passed it. She knew now that this great hulk of a man was at her mercy; that she could twist him around her finger as she pleased.

"Now talk!" ordered Axson. "Or will you let me bring you a pony of brandy to straighten you up, first?"

"Brandy?" she gasped. "T' hell with that stuff! That's what started me. I was straight, once. Honest to God I was! And now look at me!"

Her voice rose to an excited squeak.

"Will you look at me now?"

"If you don't want it, all right. Go ahead. Treat me as a friend if you can. I'll try to be one to you."

"It's a plant," said the hoarse voice. "You're tryin' to pump me!"

"Not a bit," answered Axson. "You need not say a word. You're at liberty if you wish to go."

## CHAPTER XXVI.

"GLAD."

"**B**UT what if it is a plant?" she argued to herself. "What difference does it make if I talk? What have they ever done for me? What 're they doing now? By God, I *will* talk! Partner, maybe you're crooked, but you listen square to me. I'll tell you the whole lingo."

She paused as if to collect her thoughts, and when she began speaking again, her eyes were on the floor; her voice, except for little variations here and there, was a deadly monotone.

She said: "My monniker's Gladys Stevens. 'Glad' they used to call me—Glad! Think of that for a name, and look at me in hell!"

She laughed harshly, and then went on in the dull voice: "I come up from the bushes. I'd been straight out there. And I had a pal. We were what they call sweet-hearts in books. You know? He gives me a ring, I give him my heart; and we calls it a square deal.

"Well, Larry was kind of ambitious. He wasn't no world-beater as a ranch hand, but he had a hunch he could make a hit in the big noise. So we rakes together all our kale and Larry takes it and comes down to make his pile. Then him and me was to get a cottage with a white kitchen and all that. Are you wise to that line of chatter, bo?"

"All right. Down comes Larry. Three months—a letter every day. He had a job. Ten per. He was savin' fifty red a week. Looked for a raise.

"Then two weeks and no letter. I couldn't stand it. I started for the big noise myself. That was four years ago."

She paused, with a sigh.

"Seems more like four hundred! Well, I got to town but Larry had moved. Took me ten days to get next to him. And where d' you think I found him?"

She laughed bitterly again.

"In a pawn shop—yep, in a fence! And my Larry with his blue, straight eyes, and his honest laugh, and all that rot—he was a common dip! Can you beat it? Oh, yes, it happens every day, but when it happens in your own house it damn near busts your heart—take it from me, bo!"

"You can figure for yourself what happens after that." I tries to pull him back. He swears he'll walk straight. We tries it—livin' together. No, there wasn't no marriage. What did I care? I had his ring!

"But he couldn't make a go of it. He lost his job. We lived on bread and milk. Then we got down to bread and water. Then we had nothin' left but water. You see what happened. Larry went back to the easy graft and—I went with him!"

"Oh, it was easy money, all right. It didn't take no bean work, and we hit the high spots with the cash. Till one day a dick got the dope on Larry and hit his trail. He flew the coop, but the dick was after him. Then one day a swell gent steps in. His name was Volner. He says something like this: 'I got the dope on you. You and your side-kick is in dutch with the bulls. I can put you straight, but you got to pay my price.'

"What could I do? Sure, I'd of mortgaged my soul to get Larry into the clear. Well, that was the way we joined up with the Three X. Four years ago!

"It was a cinch at first. When things is all to the bad, like one time Larry got nicked in the leg and laid up for a month, the Triple X comes across with the kale and keeps us on Easy Street. When we works, the Triple X lays the plant and dopes the getaway. Nothin' to it.

"S matter of fact, it was too easy for Larry. First he begins to hit up the red. Goes around potted half the time. Then booze wasn't enough. He started the dope.

"You know how that winds up. Gawd knows I tried to get him off, but it wasn't no use. Three times we got calls for jobs



and three times Larry was dead to the world and I had to pull the graft alone. The fourth time I tries it I get hooked and sent up for a stretch. Oh, I didn't mind the stretch—not much. But Larry, he couldn't get along without me. He needed me like his—dope! So he goes to a dick and makes a deal. He's to blow the stuff on the Three X and I'm to come off clear. Think o' that! And me with only twenty days of the stretch left! But poor old Larry couldn't wait.

"Well, the dick had to talk with the higher-ups before he could make the deal. So Larry was to come back next day with everything fixed. But he didn't come back. No, there's where the Three X come in. It made a night call on Larry and took him to the Hole-in-the-Wall."

"And what," broke in Axson, "is the Hole-in-the-Wall?"

She stared at him incredulously.

"I thought you was on the inside?" she said.

"I've never heard of the Hole-in-the-Wall," he said.

She considered a moment.

"It don't do no harm to talk about it," she said, "as long as you don't know where it is. It used to be a Chink hangout. It's about a million tunnels dug underground and weavin' in and out so's you couldn't find your way out of it—not in a million years, bo! There's a dozen ways of gettin' in. But nobody but the three main squeezes knows where all them tunnels leads to. That's the beauty part! Well, that's the low-down hangout of the Three X. That's where they keeps the boys that works for 'em. That's where the low-downs, the dips and the yeggs lies up when the bulls are on the trail. The Chinks is in on it. They run some gamblin' joints down there underground and some hop joints. And they play hand in glove with the Three X. Hell fire couldn't make one of them Chinks talk about the Three X.

"Also, when a guy goes crooked, that's where the Three X sends him. And that's where they sent Larry.

"They didn't put him to sleep right off. Nope, they waited till I finished my stretch. They wanted to see if I had anything to

do with blowin' the game. So when I was in the clear they grabbed me and put me through the third degree. That devil Louis Masters done that.

"But pretty soon he finds out that I got no finger in the pot. Then a couple of days later he brings me up on the carpet again. He tells me just what Larry done. He tells me there's one way of gettin' Larry in the clear—and that's to bump off a chap that done him dirt—John Axson. He gives me a week to pull the trick. I makes the try, here I am; that's the yarn. Of course you figure it's faked."

She dropped back in her chair, exhausted.

She went on in that dull voice: "So the game goes through and the bottom falls out under it, and inside a week Larry is put to sleep. Well, it won't be long before I'm on his trail. What 've I got to live for, eh?"

Through the latter part of the sordid story Axson had sat with his big hand shading his eyes while he stared down at the floor. And this gave the girl an opportunity to watch him unobserved. So while she talked her eyes were on his face. Eyes of ferretlike brightness. The gleam in them went in and out as she made point after point and saw the brow of the big man contract as if in pain. At last she lay passive, waiting.

"I dunno why I tell you all this," she muttered, "but it seemed like I had to tell somebody."

"What came out of the dirt goes back to the dirt," said Axson softly to himself. "After all, it's manifest destiny."

Raising his head he said sharply: "Where is the Hole-in-the-Wall?"

She started and then her harsh laughter filled the room.

"D' you think I'm a plain nut?" she gasped at last. "D' you think I'd tell you that? Say, Axson, they'd kill me inch by inch. That's what they'd do!"

He answered: "Are you going to make no attempt to get Larry out?"

"Am I goin' to make no attempt to climb up to the moon? Sure I ain't! Get Larry out? I'd have to carry him, 'bo! They got him dead to the world with dope.

They don't even have to lock the door on him."

"Haven't you any pals who would carry him out?"

"My pals is all inside the Three X," she answered. "D' you think that they'd throw themselves away because of me and Larry? No, I tell you, it ain't possible to save him!"

She said it with a dull finality, but a fire of eagerness was in her eyes.

"Impossible?" echoed Axson. "My poor girl, very few things are impossible—to a man who has his mind made up."

He had risen beyond her hope to the bait. She had to cover her face with a sudden movement of her hand.

"It's easy to talk," said the girl faintly. "It's a hell of a sight harder to come across with deeds!"

"I have an idea," said Axson, more to himself than to her, "that I shall see the inside of the Hole-in-the-Wall."

"You'll see the inside of hell sooner!" cried the girl.

"You wouldn't take me there?"

"Me? D' you think I'm off the nut?"

"Not to save Larry, eh?"

"Larry!" she cried, bolting up to her feet. "What d'you mean? What's Larry to you?"

"A poor devil who suffers," answered Axson.

"Well?"

"And who has my sympathy?"

"What d'you mean? What d'you know about suffering?"

"A very little," said Axson with a faint smile.

"You mean you'd go with me and take a try at getting Larry out?"

"I have nothing better to do."

"Bo, you'd have one chance in a million of bringin' yourself back alive."

"It would make a very slight difference," said Axson thoughtfully. "I believe that I should not be missed."

"I'm tryin' to believe you mean it, Axson! Is it because"—her voice softened—"you're kind of sorry for me?"

"I pity you with all my heart," said the big man simply.

The girl caught her breath. She was not acting now.

"I thought," she said, "that there was no pity in you!"

"You were told very truly," he answered. "I've never before known what pity could be."

"Then what taught you?"

"Because I've been very unhappy all my life," said Axson, "but it was only a day or two ago that I learned what there was in the world from which I was cut off."

"Cut off from what? You got plenty of kale, ain't you?"

"Cut off from friends—from everything that money will not buy. I am, in a sense which you cannot understand, an experiment. A scientific experiment made in flesh and blood. And now—well, I should take a rather ironical pleasure in throwing away that long experiment—for nothing—for Larry."

"You mean you'd be ready," said the girl, summing up the points on the slender tips of her fingers, "to come with me before the week was up and make a try at savin' Larry? You mean that?"

"You can put it that way."

"You'd go into the Hole-in-the-Wall?"

"I would."

"Say," muttered the girl, "what kind of a guy are you?"

"I am a fool," said Axson deliberately, "who had room in his heart for only one dream, and when that was gone he was willing to throw his heart away after it."

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK. Don't forget this magazine is issued weekly, and that you will get the continuation of this story without waiting a month.

A Story  
of the  
Old West

BEGINS IN NEXT WEEK'S ALL-STORY

## Midnight of the Ranges

BY GEORGE GILBERT

When Sand  
and Six-Guns  
Ruled



# Hats and Flowers



by



George Kerr O'Neill

MISS VIOLET MCGOWAN shifted and reshifted, adjusted and readjusted, the bewildering array of flowers and foliage and ribbon superimposed on a spreading disk of straw which a woman would have termed a "creation" and a husband have identified as "Another hat! my God!"

She tilted it now to one angle, now to another, critical eye vigilantly noting the advantages or disadvantages of this or that particular slant or color combination or floral design. That the bonnet pleased her the mirrored-reflection of the smile that dimpled her plump cheeks was ample evidence. Her solicitude now was solely that a masterpiece might be enabled to exhibit its manifold qualities at their superb best.

"When I see a hat like this on me I almost give thanks I'm fat. It takes a big woman to wear a head coverin' the size of this lid."

She interrupted her musings to give it another twist and poke, and tilted her head sidewise, eyes half closed, considering the latest revelation of its charms.

"I like plenty of exterior decoration in mine. And it takes a big hat to hold it. You can cram on the flowers and fruit and verdure until it looks like a description of the glories of their native State by the California Boosters, and you can't scare me.

"None of those dinky little plain thimblelike things, with half a feather or a

square inch of ribbon stuck somewhere where it won't offend the eye of the fastidious, for this lady. I leave that to the highbrows that pretend to like it. Me, I want things gorgeous."

If the present headgear were an indication of her preferences, she spoke no more than the solemn truth. It filled the bill, and then some, and then some more. The Queen of the Cannibal Islands would have coveted it. So would the king.

At first glance an observer would have sworn that all the flowers in the garden, and most of those in the catalogue, had been requisitioned for the symposium. A colorfully vociferous gown gave excellent support to the hat. And her own opulent charms shone the more resplendent for their sympathetic setting. Truly Solomon in all his glory would have seemed but a pale ghost of magnificence, and would have lowered his head in shame had he met up with Violet gowned for a garden party. But Solomon was safely dead, and was spared the humiliating experience.

So Violet, the headpiece finally adjusted at its most killing angle, grabbed a parasol that held up its end bravely with the rest of her, and sallied forth to do her darndest with those that were still alive.

Her cavaliers for this particular occasion were awaiting her descent in charge of a car of a well-known make. The smaller, a wiry, youthful-appearing person with a

cheerful countenance, took one look at the array of floral offerings and clutched the car for support.

"Here comes the hearse, Bob," he gasped feebly.

"Fresh, as usual, ain't you, Tommy?" said Violet sweetly. Then she stopped short and stared at the car. The flowers in her hat trembled and bobbed violently, conductors of her mounting indignation.

"Tommy Burroughs, don't you know any better than to call for me with a flivver? You ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

"That's all right, Vi," rejoined Tommy cheerfully. "It won't mind. It isn't as if a flivver had feelings. If it were a horse, now—"

"I'm not thinkin' of anybody's feelin's but my own, Master Tommy," said Violet sarcastically. "And if you think I'm goin' to trust an irresponsible halfwit like yourself to drive me Lord knows how far on country roads in that insect, you've got another think. Bob Austin's no lightweight to start on—"

She switched her indignation to the other man, a comfortably stout, jovial elderly party.

"Bob, you ought've known enough to make him bring somethin' more substantial than this toy. I don't expect any sense ever out of Tommy Burroughs, but I do think you might have acquired a little by this time."

"That's a very unkind cut at my age, Vi," grinned Bob reproachfully; "but I forgive you. It's perfectly safe. The only difficulty's to get in. If you can manage that you can have the rear seat to yourself."

"Bob's right. This is the only make of car warranted never to go broke. Its only fault is a tendency to leave the earth at times if a man hits up any speed, so that he's not quite sure whether he's driving an airplane or a motor-car; but with the bal-last we've got now—well, all I can say is, watch my smoke!"

"Bob, he scares me more every word he speaks. He hadn't ought to be let loose with a car. He's just as apt as not to pile the thing up, so's he can have the laugh on me rollin' into a ditch."

Tommy shook his head.

"You couldn't roll into a ditch, Vi. Once in the car, you'll be wedged so tight that nothing short of an earthquake would part you. And you can't break any bones, whatever happens. Come on, be a sport. Any car's liable to have an accident; and if a telegraph pole hit you in the eye at sixty miles an hour, you couldn't tell from the feeling whether it happened in a flivver or a Molls-Joyce. The difference would be inconsequential."

"Perhaps you're right, Tommy. But think of the difference in the advertisin' value. There's some glory attached to bein' smashed up in a twelve-cylinder limousine; but imagine how it would sound: 'Miss Violet McGowan, the well-known variety head-liner, is in the hospital with severe contusions, owin' to her flivver overturnin'.'"

"Those reporter Johnnies would get fresh at my expense and say I leaned a little to one side to look over the rail, and the boat turned turtle. Yes, Tommy, I take more than my life in my hands, if I set foot in your sample-size automobile. You've got a lot of responsibility on your shoulders. So watch your step!"

It was one of those rare, perfect June days of which the poet sings. No top shut out the arching blue; and Violet's miniature garden was upreared, unhindered, to bask in the golden, genial sunshine, as the car rolled off.

Tommy glanced askance at her attire.

"Maybe you'll wish you'd worn a motor coat—"

"No—that rain last night has laid the dust. I'll be as fresh as a daisy when we arrive—if this mustang of yours behaves itself."

"Cheer up, Vi. Amy'll get her guest of honor in first-class condition, with not so much as a single flower in her bonnet harmed."

"She'd better. I almost wish I'd jumped at her offer to send one of their own cars for me. I would have if I could've guessed what was ahead of me. But I didn't like to begin by accepting favors of them this early. It ain't so long ago I was doin' my darndest to stop the weddin'."



"What!" Tommy choked.

"The sad truth, Tommy. How was I to know he had twenty or thirty millions? He didn't look it."

"Anyway," she added, "I didn't succeed, so all's well that ends well."

"Better try your hand at matchmaking next, Vi. Leave matchbreaking to those more competent."

"Guess I will," she agreed. "Though not this trip. I'm goin' to lay off all Cupid stuff, for or against, temporarily. I want a vacation from trouble. It's the first time I ever spent a week-end at a millionaire's country place—or perhaps I should say, one of his *numerous* country places—and I expect to enjoy myself."

She glanced at them sharply and suspiciously.

"Though I don't see why you've been laughin' to split yourself all this time. I can't see that anybody's said anything as funny as all that. What's the joke?"

"Nothing, Vi—nothing," gurgled Tommy. "We were reminded of something."

Fortunately for them Violet could not know that she herself had been the victim of a "matchmaking" conceived in the fertile brain of Tommy, and carried, with the help of his older companion, to a much more successful conclusion than her own misdirected effort, still less, that the very car she was riding in had been acquired with part of the profits resulting from that unfeeling shattering of love's young dream.

Tommy had not overstated the ability of his car to travel. It ate up the miles greedily, despite the fact that the freight it carried was no less weighty in other respects than in the physical sense. Bob Austin was a widely known character actor; Tommy Burroughs, a comedian of no mean talents, though so far a perverse fate had operated to prevent his ever getting ahead of the game financially. And last, but by no means least, either physically or otherwise, Vi McGowan, of the Two-a-Day; Vi McGowan, darling of the vaudeville fans, breezy, cyclonic comedienne, high priestess of the song and dance—Violet, of the heavy body and the light fantastic toe, her ability a marvel in one of her generous breadth of beam.

"Didn't I tell you we'd burn up the road?" exclaimed Tommy boastfully. "We'll be there in a brace of shakes."

"For the love of Mike, don't say such things," cried Violet, alarmed, "when there's nothin' but tin to knock!"

Her warning came too late. Queer sounds came from the car. It coughed once or twice, slowed down, and stopped dead.

Several times the amateur chauffeur went through the ritual prescribed for starting a car of that particular brand. The car did not seem to mind.

"What on earth's the matter now, Tommy?"

"Hanged if I know. The darned thing won't go, that's all."

"That's a plenty!" snapped Violet. "I'm the wrong shape for pedestrian tours. You pretend you know how to run a car. I might have known better."

"I do know how to run 'em—when they run. But what can a fellow do when they refuse to run—I'm asking you."

"No, Tommy, we're askin' *you*. You're the engineer in charge of this expedition. Didn't you learn anything about the habits of the insect when you got stung by it? Get out and lift the hood and poke around; or grab a monkey-wrench and crawl underneath the car on your back. It's always done."

"It may not accomplish anything, but it makes everybody feel hopeful—for a while, at least—besides bein' a judgment on the one that got 'em into the fix. Make yourself *look* useful, at least."

"That getting out idea sounds good, Vi. Suppose we all try it. What with you and Bob—who knows? Maybe it's just throwing a hint. Even a flivver may turn!"

"No aspersions, Master Tommy. However, thanks for the suggestion. I'll be glad to give my legs a stretch—particularly as we're likely to be here some time. There never was a car breakdown yet that the occupants weren't there some time."

Bob descended and assisted her to alight. She smoothed the wrinkles out of her dress and felt to see that her precious headgear was still securely anchored.

"Now, Tommy, go to it. The parties

that stuck you with it surely gave you some first-aid information."

"I got it second-hand—"

"I knew it!"

"The chap was real obliging. Showed me how to run it, and talked a lot of stuff about carburetors and ignition and clutches, and so forth, but it was all French to me. I know which is the gas tank, and which is the self-starter, and that's my limit. I've tried the self-starter, but you've noticed she doesn't start worth a darn."

"I've noticed it don't. Don't insult my sex by wishing this contraption onto it. Better try the gas-tank," she added sarcastically.

A canary yellow car, a long, graceful, high-powered runabout, swung round a curve down the road, and swept toward them, her engine running without a sound.

"That's that Irene Mortimer! Don't take any help from her, or I'll never speak to you again!"

The big car arrested its swift career so abruptly it was like a touch of magic. A man of early middle age, with little to distinguish him from any number of others, was at the wheel. He nodded affably. The woman at his side surveyed them languidly, with a faint elevation of her eyebrows.

"Vi McGowan, I do declare. And Mr. Austin. And Mr. Burroughs. How delightful."

She spoke in a carefully cultivated drawl with a faintly supercilious intonation. She was undeniably handsome, and though several years older than Violet, contrived to look even younger. She was a past mistress of the ancient art of camouflage. She made up expertly, never overdoing it. Hence, though thirty, she looked twenty. A motoring veil lent able assistance to the deception at the present moment.

"In trouble?" she inquired, with mock solicitude. "Can we help?"

"Oh, no, no," said Tommy hastily. "Just resting."

"Resting?" She let her glance pause for a space on Violet, then on the car. "Oh, yes—I understand. I don't know that I blame you. The poor thing doubtless needs it."

She looked toward Violet again.

"How considerate of you to get out, my dear. You always had a good heart."

Violet tossed her head, and fumed inwardly that she could think of nothing to say.

"That's some boat," said Bob, as the car made off. "That husband of hers must be fairly upholstered with money."

"He won't be long," sniffed Violet, "if he gives her half a chance. Some persons' brains run to nothin' but spendin'."

"Come, come, Vi," chided her companion. "Cut out the professional jealousy stuff. She's chock full of ability. You know that. It's not like you not to give the devil his due. Where does the shoe pinch this time?"

"Oh, I'm willin' to give the devil her due," agreed Violet. "She can act. I just don't like her sort, that's all. The way she treated the Jordans settled her with me."

"What was that? I'm not hep to the variety squabbles."

"Oh, it was three years ago, before Irene became Mrs. Richard Trask and left the stage. Ted and Mary Jordan had a little act, nothin' to rave about, but good enough to get by on the big time—though that ain't always sayin' much. But theirs had its points, and they'd 've been good for the season, easy. They needed the coin, too, because they had a sick kid in the hospital that was walkin' into their roll for specialists' fees, and all the rest."

"Irene knew that, too. She was headlinin' at the Mammoth. They came just ahead of her on the bill. She put up a holler, claimin' that some of their stuff infringed on her turn. They had to cut most of the meat out of their act, and were shoved down next the acrobats. That killed 'em dead."

"When their six weeks preliminary bookin' was up, they couldn't get any more. They had to go back to the small time at half the salary. Later on they got another sketch, and landed back in big company where they belonged; but it was a hard crack at the time. Mary told me they had their own time comin' through. And what with the worry and all, Mary's never been the same woman since."



"I hear Irene's thinking of coming back," put in Tommy.

"I shouldn't wonder. She did pretty well to stand a husband three years, if you ask me. She must 've been in love."

"I'm told he's going to take a big share in backing Crowninshield's new musical production he expects so much of," said Bob. "For value received, no doubt."

"Well, he'll probably be as glad to get her off his hands for a time as she will him. First they're crazy to get 'em off the stage; then they're crazy to get 'em back on. Can you beat it?"

The sound of another car broke in on the discussion. The newcomer interested himself in their plight. He gave the car the once over and grinned.

"Gas tank's empty. I can fix you up."

"As a chauffeur you're some actor, Tommy," said Violet, as they resumed their journey. "I told you to try the gas tank."

The encounter rankled. Half the pleasure was gone out of the trip for Violet. Irene always affected her that way, left her with a violent desire to murder some one, preferably Irene. Something occurred to her. She frowned.

"Irene 'll have everybody rounded up to be on hand when we drive up. See if she don't! I know her!"

But as they approached their journey's end a still more awful possibility occurred to her. She leaned forward and clutched Tommy's arm. She never knew how near she came to deflecting the car into the ditch she had dreaded.

"The movin'-picture men! They're sure to be all planted to take me as we drive up. And in a flivver! Tommy Burroughs, you've just got to stop this car before we get there, so's I can sneak round the back way—"

"Nonsense, Vi," soothed Bob. "They'll think it's one of your little jokes. They expect it of you. It 'll go over big. They'll swear you're funnier off the stage than on. It 'll be worth half a column."

Violet sank back with a sigh.

"Lord, Bob, you're some comforter. Maybe you're right. Thanks for them kind words."

As it turned out, she had had no real notion of what was before her. She was aware that the occasion was something unique in a social way, a house party at a millionaire's country estate, with the majority of the guests connected in one way or another with the stage, with herself as the guest of honor; and that the motion-picture 'weeklies' would have their camera men on hand to film the outstanding features of the festivities.

But it was only when, on the arch over the great iron gates at the entrance to the drive, she read, in enormous letters woven of violets: *Welcome, Vi McGowan*—and beheld the crowd round the big Queen Anne cottage that crowned the slope, from which fluttered a riot of color that delighted her soul in the shape of flags and pennons and streamers; and when, on their near approach a band struck up, "Hail to the Chief!" and the crowd broke into cheers and waved handkerchiefs and flags—it was only then that she realized for the first time in her life that she was something of a personage.

Like all stage people of ability she had her little vanities. She knew that she did good work, and that the public enjoyed it. Yet, unlike some others, she had never regarded herself as anything extraordinary. Now—did people really like her as much as all that?

She gulped. She hastily brushed away a film of moisture. She forgot Irene Mortimer, forgot she was riding in a flivver. The warmth of it! Oh, the dear people—the dear, dear people! Who said stage folk were jealous of one another? How she loved them—loved them all!

And then—what was that? Those men grinding at their cranks. Oh, yes—of course. The moving-picture men. Her bonnet, her precious, gorgeous bonnet, was assured of immortality; its beauties caught and held and preserved for a fortunate posterity by the magic of the film. She glowed.

And there was Amy, with her same Dresden china fragility—Amy Meadows, in her first thought, so short a time was it since Amy Meadows had teamed with her, and shared her home and her affections;

but in reality Mrs. Charles Loftus. And Charlie, with the non-detachable smile due to lips that never quite met—the smile that she had once thought silly, but which now appeared warm and genial, such is the magic of millions.

As he approached to assist her to alight, Violet experienced an unaccustomed sensation of awe, in the presence of a real multimillionaire; and she was relieved to perceive that the lord of all this domain was actually in a blue funk, underneath his smiling exterior, just as much afraid of her as he had been when she was playing the rôle of dragon between him and his beloved.

Violet was not quite clear how she got through all the greetings. She moved in a delicious trance in which kisses and handshakings figured prominently, and zealous reporters hovered near to catch whatever of interest might fall from the lips of celebrities.

It was all too good to be true. She was sure she would wake up any minute. And she knew she had waked up, when she perceived Irene near her in the crowd; saw her glance at Tommy's car with her habitual lift of the brows and prepare to speak. She felt it in her bones—if she had bones—that Irene was envious of the reception she was getting, and was going to say something to spoil it all. Irene never had liked her, and always went out of her way to give her a dig, the cat!

"What I can't understand, Vi," Irene drawled languidly, "is how both you and the hat contrived to get into that car at one and the same time."

Violet had a propensity for talking back on the slightest provocation. She could not resist the temptation now, and those present were regaled with a choice sample of vaudevillian repartee.

"Don't overwork your brain, Irene—it's easy. They didn't. I carried the hat outside—in the upper air, if you get me."

"Oh, to be sure, Vi. I've heard of hanging gardens."

"If I had my way there'd be a lot of other hangin' goin' on. I ain't opposed to capital punishment—for some people."

"If they ever try it on you, Vi, I advise

them to stick to electrocution—or get a steel cable."

Miss McGowan showed symptoms of losing her temper.

"I hate a person who can't be funny without bein' personal. Not that they're so awful funny, at that."

"They can't help it, Vi. Just as some persons just can't be personal without bein' funny."

"Come on, Amy—get me away from here—before I forget I'm a lady."

"What a long ways back you can remember, my dear—if you can remember anything like that."

"I can remember farther back than that, even—I can remember when your hair was your own—if you'll excuse my bein' personal, darling. But I was playin' child parts, then."

Her antagonist looked Violet over again, very slowly. Her eyes widened.

"Dear, dear," she drawled. "To think that there was ever a time when you were smaller, darling. It's impossible to imagine it—looking at you now."

Violet ground her teeth in rage. Why was it she never could think of anything to say to Irene Mortimer? She always contrived to have the last word. She abandoned the unequal contest. She took Amy's arm.

"Hurry along, child. If I stay any longer I'll commit murder."

On another occasion she would have gone into raptures over the dainty boudoir to which Amy showed her. Now she felt only like walking around and smashing things. What a faculty some persons had for blotting out the sunshine—born joy-killers.

She had been so happy, so overflowing with affection for all humankind, a few short minutes before. Now she could cheerfully wipe the whole human race off the planet, and never feel a twinge of remorse.

"Of course there had to be somethin' to spoil my week-end," she thought bitterly.

"What good times we might have, if it wasn't for other people!"

While beating her retreat she had noticed one of the press men, with a satirical gleam in his eye, pull a note-book from his pocket and begin to scribble in it hastily. Know-



ing that reporters never flash a note-book, except on the stage, trusting entirely to their extraordinary memories—which might account for some weird interviews—she knew at once that he must be desirous of getting down, with absolute accuracy, the scintillant sparks of wit thrown off by the two stars in their collision.

She writhed. It would be in all the papers how Violet McGowan had been worsted in a war of words. A nice sort of advertising to get. She was a disgrace to the Irish.

But the smart of her irritation was not proof against a silver morning after refreshing slumbers. Manhattan cockney that she was, Violet received exquisite delight from a visit to the country, provided it was brief. Too much of it palled on her, but the first taste was divine. As she leaned out of the window, bathing in the flood of limpid light, inhaling deep lungfuls of the cool morning air, she was once more at peace with all the world, forgiving every one, even Irene.

Providentially, too, no one joked her about yesterday's passage-at-arms. Everyone was so nice. And she met so many old friends, whom she had not seen for an age. She was glad she had come.

One among the guests claimed her interest from the start. She had not met Sylvia Grayling before, and had never seen her work, though she had often heard her spoken of as a coming woman. At present she appeared to be no more than seventeen, fresh and sweet and clean as the morning itself, of a slim, girlish type of beauty reminding her in many ways of Amy; and with the shy diffidence of a child, despite a suggestion of power, of a mental maturity disproportionate to her years. Violet felt strangely drawn to her, as if in some way their lives were to touch, if only for an instant.

Bob Austin noticed her interest in the girl, which moved him later to speak of her. He did not realize what events were to be set in motion by his words.

"You seemed to be taken with the Grayling kid, Vi. Maybe you'll be all the more fond of her when I tell you that she's Irene's very particular thorn in the flesh at the present time."

"What's that?"

"Yes. I gather from some of the boys that Crowninshield's by no means committed to Irene. He wants an extremely youthful type—the real thing. He'd grab the kid in a minute, but it happens Irene saw a copy of the manuscript he had lent Trask—Crowninshield having been after him to take a share in the production—and right away she coveted the part.

"Her heart was set on it. And when Irene wants a thing, she wants it bad. She immediately commanded Trask to get it for her. What is a rich hubby for, if not to work miracles? So Crowninshield's on the fence."

"I'd like to help the kid," said Violet impulsively. "She's a nice kid."

"No other reasons, of course," grinned Bob.

"Not now, Bob. I'm at peace with the world. I'd forgive my worst enemy—in this air."

The guests had been left to their own devices, given the run of the truly lordly estate. At that moment, as if to give point to Bob's remark, a canary yellow car swept through the gates and out onto the turnpike, a woman at the wheel.

Irene was off for a spin alone. Violet watched it out of sight, placidly. As she had truthfully said, at that moment she felt at peace with all the world—at that moment.

Not long after Bob had left her, Violet had indisputable evidence of the truth of the gossip. She was seated in the shelter of some shrubbery, lazily day-dreaming. Voices roused her.

Trask and Crowninshield were strolling, deep in talk, along a path which ran near her place of concealment. As they passed she could not help overhearing a portion of their conversation—or rather, did not try to help. If the truth must be told, she pricked up her ears and strained them to their limit. Crowninshield was speaking.

"That's true—Irene can get herself up to *look* young. But, you know—this girl has got to breathe the very spirit of youth—of young girlishness. Grayling's just the type. The part fits her like a glove.

"I want to oblige you, Dick—and I

probably will—but I'll have to think it over a bit, yet."

"Well, you know, old man—my backing goes with her—and it doesn't go without her."

The manager laughed.

"Oh, as for that—I can get all the backing I need—if I don't decide to carry it myself. I believe in this piece. No, Dick, if I engage Irene for the part, it will be solely to oblige you—not for the backing.

"I've got to decide between Irene's ability and experience and the other's perfect type—with a whole lot of natural ability thrown in—I'm not forgetting that. I'm not just quite sure—and I'm goin' to be sure. So it's no good tryin' to rush me, my boy."

They drifted out of earshot. Violet sat thinking. Oh, well—what was the use? She'd like to help the kid. A nice kid. And she wouldn't mind taking a crack at Irene. Not in malice—she had forgiven Irene—but just as a salutary lesson. Irene needed a lesson.

Violet began to feel quite virtuous over it, like other reformers. But there didn't seem to be any way. And she was too lazy to rack her brains for ideas. Best not to meddle in other people's affairs, anyway. She had come here to enjoy herself.

She sighed, and thrust the problem from her. Crowninshield could decide it to suit himself. It was none of her funeral.

Shortly after that Amy got out a car—a *real* car, Violet remarked, with Tommy beside her—and took the trio for a look at the neighboring country, leaving her husband behind to see to the comfort of the rest of the guests.

It was on the way back, by a different route, that a little patch of woods pierced by a brook frolicking over a pebbly bed elicited a crow of delight from Violet. Nothing would serve but that they descend and explore. It had been long since she had pushed her way through a thicket and listened to bird-calls echoing through green aisles flecked with vagrant sun-rays.

But Amy and Bob did not enthuse. Neither did they feel like waiting an indefinite period in the car. Amy solved the problem.

"We're almost home. Bob and I can take a short cut across' the fields here. We'll leave you the car. Tommy can drive you back when you get good and ready."

"Yes," agreed Violet; "Tommy can drive a car—as long as the gas holds out."

As they plunged—figuratively speaking; it was somewhat slow going for Violet—into the miniature wilderness, Violet was compelled to remove her hat, which retarded her progress considerably, and carry it at her side. It was from this apparently trivial act that all the subsequent troubles resulted.

Some time later, sated with solitude, they emerged on to the summit of the steep bank above the road. Just as Violet stepped through the outer barrier of undergrowth, a forked twig caught her skirt and pulled her up with a sudden jerk.

In the surprise of it her hat, dangling loosely at her side, slipped from her fingers and rolled down the bank to the middle of the road. At the same instant she saw the familiar canary-yellow car almost upon it.

Ever afterward she swore that Irene had seen it and made no attempt to stop. Hadn't Violet had ocular evidence of the ease and suddenness with which that car could be checked? No, Irene had made the car spring right at it, just like a tiger pouncing on its prey.

That was what the yellow car appeared like to Violet at that instant, a big yellow ferocious, bloodthirsty tiger.

"Tommy! Tommy—my hat!" she wailed.

Had a poet been present he could have embalmed what followed in an immortal epic. But, in plain United States, lacking the poet's inspired measures, what the automobile did to that hat was a shame. It was more than a shame, it was a crime.

It struck it and tossed it, and for a long instant of suspense, while Violet held all the breath her body would hold, it rolled cart-wheelwise before the malevolently pursuing vehicle intent on its destruction, holding out hopes that it might even yet win clear. Then the left fore wheel caught it and tossed it to the right, and the right tossed it back to the left; whereupon the left, to have an end to dallying, passed over the crown.



As the tire pressed down the middle the sides came up about it, giving it the aspect of a craft plowing its way through a floral sea which threatened to engulf it. Violets, pansies, poppies—some were crushed at the first fell onslaught; others nodded wildly for one agonized instant, then too bowed their heads to the inevitable as the whirling wheel of juggernaut sucked them under.

Violet's long-held breath left her in one rending sigh of mingled grief and wrath. She covered her eyes with her hands to shut out the appalling sight as the rear wheel completed what little the fore had left undone. Another instant and the car had passed, leaving in the dust of the roadway a mangled mass of crushed flowers, soiled ribbon, and torn straw that had once been a hat—a love of a hat, a darling, a jewel, a pippin of a hat.

Violet stumbled down the bank and gathered up the remains and pressed them passionately to her bosom. She shook her fist after the vehicle of destruction.

"She did it on purpose! She did it on purpose—the cat!"

That afternoon was a severe trial to Violet. Her grief was allowed no rest. Everyone she met inquired solicitously regarding the whereabouts of her hat. Proof positive that its pulchritude had made a hit. And now it was no more, so untimely. All beautiful things die young. And even the most durable of flowers is not automobile proof.

Later she came face to face with Irene. Irene did not seek to avoid her, but turned to her a face of smiling innocence.

"Why—where is your hat, dear?"

"The cat!" thought Violet. She had been mad before; now she was coldly vindictive. "What wouldn't she do to Irene, only give her half a chance! But she smiled sweetly.

"I thought I'd better leave it off, darling. It didn't seem to please you."

"How considerate," purred Irene. "But you always had a good heart, dear."

Then she passed on.

"She ought to be ashamed to look me in the face," thought Violet. "It's like her to pretend she didn't see it—when it was just murder, the way she ran over that hat."

To say that Irene had spoiled Violet's enjoyment of the sylvan pleasures was putting it mildly. Everywhere she looked she saw red. She shunned the society of the other guests. They appeared to have a mania for asking her what she was hipped about.

In this mood she sought seclusion in the undergrowth on the shores of a little lake, one of the features of the estate. It was natural, with no deadly artificial improvements, and was fed by the same brook that had so unfortunately caught Violet's fancy earlier in the day.

Here, in a spot for the time being free from other guests, she furiously racked her brains for some way of getting even on the grand scale. It was not to be thought of that Irene should come off victor, should escape just retribution. Other injuries Violet might have overlooked, but for what Irene had done to her hat no punishment could be terrible enough.

Incidentally it would also square the account of the Jordans, whose misfortunes Violet had always laid at Irene's door. If it helped the Grayling kid into the bargain, so much the better. That was what it always came back to. Because at that moment what the Grayling kid wanted was what Irene wanted; and the surest way to make Irene suffer was to take from her whatever she had most set her heart on at the time.

While in this mood she happened to raise her glance, and through an opening in the screen of bushes beheld Irene seated in a small skiff moored to the bank only a short distance off, happily ignorant of the proximity of her deadliest enemy. At the same moment, in the near middle distance and headed in their direction, she perceived Trask and Crowninshield.

The first glance told her how things stood. Crowninshield's attitude was one of resignation; Trask's, of thinly veiled elation. The manager was on the point of yielding, worn down by the other's insistence.

In a flash Violet realized why Irene was seated over there in the boat. The light in the shelter of the foliage that lined the bank was subdued and restful. Here was no garish day to betray the secrets of the dress-

ing-table. Irene made as perfect a picture as one could well wish of youth and romantic charm. She might have been one of the spirits of the place as she sat trailing a slender white hand in the water.

The picture was to be for Crowninshield an enchanting visual surprise, to furnish an irresistible climax to Trask's arguments. The manager would say yes the instant he saw her. He would, too—Violet could not doubt it.

She felt the urge of a swift impulse. Violet had been accustomed to trust her impulses. She trusted this one and acted on it. She started to run along the path.

As she came out on the bank above the boat she could see the gravelly bottom of the lake only a short distance below the surface. Irene started and looked up with a bewitching smile, the smile she had prepared for Crowninshield's benefit. Violet jumped off the bank with both feet, plump into the boat.

"Lo, Irene! Thought I'd join you."

Nothing like that had ever happened to the boat before. It gurgled once, and started for the bottom of the lake. At least, half of it did. Violet's feet had struck a little to starboard, so it had caromed in that direction.

When it had taken in fifty or sixty gallons the other side voted to join it. Violet grabbed a bush as it went under. Irene screamed. Violet screamed, and clutched Irene. The water just there was only three feet deep, but in the resultant confusion Irene's head was shoved under for a time.

Then Violet, hanging tight to the bush, drew her out, dripping. The men came running up. They pulled Irene up the bank. Then both of them, after a struggle, managed to do the same for Violet.

Her hair was plastered in strings to her face. Some of it—hers by right of purchase—was awry. Subtle flesh tones had somehow, in spots, contrived to shift location, and were a convincing illustration of the evils of the right thing in the wrong place. Portions of her eyebrows had liquified, and were obeying the law of gravitation. The effect was rather streaked.

Her beauty had been beguiling. Now she was the reverse even of prepossessing.

"Oh, Irene, I'm so sorry!" cried Violet.

This was the final tactful touch. Irene seethed with a primitive fury that lifted her for the moment out of consciousness of an audience, and she unloosed a torrent of vituperation on Violet that exhibited a pronounced reversion to type, a harking back to the vocabulary of a distant past, before she had carefully encased a native vulgarity in a veneer of the outward forms and ceremonies of culture.

Her passion completed the transformation. For the moment she looked twice her age, instead of ten years younger, her usual practice. Violet was shocked and remorseful. She had expected nothing like this. Bother the old hat, anyway.

And just then, as if Providence itself were leagued against Irene, others came hurrying up, among them Sylvia Grayling. She leaned forward, lightly poised atiptoe, looking curiously at the scene.

She had been running. Her eyes sparkled with the ecstasy of mere existence. Her cheeks were faintly dyed with nature's own carmine. Her rosebud lips slightly parted in childlike wonder. Her lissome body gave the impression, even in repose, that she was about to fly off into swift darting activity, so aquiver was it with youth's superabundant vitality. She exhaled the fresh fragrance of life's morning.

She was youth, springtime incarnate.

Crowninshield looked from one to the other, but he said nothing.

As Irene calmed down, and the party set out for the house, Violet stood aside to let them pass. She found Tommy at her elbow.

"He'll never engage her now. See if he does! I could tell by the look in his eye."

Tommy turned and peered at her searchingly.

"Vi McGowan! You did it on purpose!"

Violet sniffed.

"Well, why not?"

He shook his finger at her reprovingly.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself."

Violet tossed her head rebelliously.

"Well, I ain't! Not one little bit! At least—not when I think of poor Mary Jordan. And *my hat!*"



# Cry Baby

## by John H. Blackwood

### CHAPTER I.

#### FATHER PROPOSES—EDNA DISPOSES.

**N**OBODY ever thought of calling Edna Fowler anything but "Cry Baby." Even her father resorted to this nickname at times—times when his patience was exhausted by his only daughter's insistence upon possessing something and when, in face of his set, determined, steel-like parental refusal there would come a freshet of feminine tears that never failed completely to upset his prevoiced decision and gained for the twenty-year-old girl just what she had made up her mind she wanted.

Mrs. Fowler was not so easily influenced by the tyranny of her daughter's tears. "You'll only make your eyes red and goodness knows you're none too pretty anyway!" was the maternal reception of Edna's most effective method of procuring whatever she thought was necessary to her happiness.

Of course, Edna's mother, knowing the value of the tear duct better than Edna's father, seemingly was not so easily influenced, but there always came to the mother's mind a little trick she often had made use of herself—a trick that resembled in its general features the very artifice that her own daughter now found so useful.

The Fowlers lived in the small mid-Western city of Dalton. Fowler, *père*, was a successful merchant as success is measured in financial terms in municipalities of the like of Dalton. Fowler, *mère*, was progressive, modern to a degree in thought and word, and was always to the fore in any movement that found favor with the feminine population of Dalton.

Edna had gone to the graded schools;

then her scholastic career had carried her through the Dalton High—and then came the first real contest between parents and daughter—when it was suggested that an Eastern college was the very thing needed to add a finishing-touch to Edna's schooling.

Did Edna grasp the opportunity to wrestle with Greek and algebra and the early historic conditions of another world and such other stuff as her keen little mind instantly told her she would be bothered with if the parental ambitions for her were carried to a fruition? Well, not exactly so one would notice!

On the contrary, Edna merely said: "I don't want to go to college, and what's more, I sha'n't!"

But her father and mother sought to dissuade her from this decision and for a time, when they called in reserves in the shape of three of her chums who were scheduled to go to Eastern schools that fall, Edna's determination seemed to totter—almost to fall, but when the father and the mother, happy in their seemingly secure victory over the stubbornness of their only child, commenced to make rather complete plans for Edna's struggle for a degree they were suddenly confronted one morning with the young lady's announcement to the effect that: "I'm not going to college, after all."

"But you said you *would*!" exclaimed her father.

"So I did—that's true, but I've changed my mind," calmly responded the young woman. "Yes, I've changed my mind—I've decided that I shall get married, instead—it's ever so much more fun, and, besides, I think I'll like it better than having to go to some old poky, stuffy school. Yes, I shall get married."

"But, Edna, surely—" her mother commenced when a warning look from her husband caused her to waver in what she was about to say, while Pater Fowler once more took the argumentative floor.

"See here, daughter," he said boldly, "you're going to college just as we've decided upon—and, furthermore, you're going next week."

"Father, dear father and dear mother, too," cooed Edna as she went over and laid a caressing hand upon her father's unshaven cheek—for it was evening and father only shaved himself of a morning, it is worth while mentioning. "Father and dear mother, please forget all about my going to college because I've made up my mind that I shall not. I'm twenty years of age, and plenty old enough to get married."

"Married! Huh!" snorted father. "You get married!"

"Married! The very idea, and at your age!" exclaimed her mother.

"Yes, I—married!" answered Edna and there was a happy little smile upon her lips and a light that was only an infrequent visitor to her eyes—eyes that were blue enough to play the very dickens with some young man some of these days, soon.

"Who are you going to sic yourself on?" asked Mr. Fowler, and there was a note of sarcasm in his voice.

"Oh, I haven't made up my mind yet—there are plenty to choose from," answered Edna with a light laugh.

"Surely, you're not serious about getting married?" her mother asked.

"I should say I am," was the young girl's reply. "I think it would be the greatest fun in the world, too!"

"Mother," and as he spoke Mr. Fowler turned and addressed his wife, completely ignoring Edna, "have there been any young fellows hanging around our house lately?"

"Now it isn't going to do you or mother any good to try to guess who *he* is—I tell you I don't know myself, yet—but I shall, in a few days—just as soon as I can make up my mind which one I want."

"Oh, ho!" chortled Father Fowler. "You're like most of these fool young girls nowadays, you think that all you have to do to land a husband is to crook your fin-

ger, and say: 'Come here, I want you!' Well, young lady, even if you are my own daughter, you are going to be a sadly disappointed, a badly disillusioned husband-hunter before you are many months older."

"I'm thinking of grabbing the *one*—and it doesn't make any particular difference to me if he's born every minute or every hour or every year—he's going to be mine," confidently asserted the girl.

"How are you going to do it?" wondered her father.

"Oh—I've got a little system of my own," she replied with a happy little laugh, and then she added more in a spirit of deviltry than anything else: "Haven't I, mother?"

"What does she mean?" quickly asked Mr. Fowler of his wife.

"Gracious me, I haven't the slightest idea what the child is talking about," Mrs. Fowler replied.

"Have you and she been discussing her getting married?"

"Indeed we haven't," truthfully answered Mrs. Fowler.

"No, daddy, this is an idea of my own—just a little plan that I've got great faith in—a scheme I'm going to try out."

"You'll try out nothing until you are through college and you might as well understand that now as ever. Mother, you let us alone for a few minutes. I want to convince this daughter of ours that she is going to college."

"Yes, momsey," said Edna, a trifle seriously, "you let me and daddy have a good hear-to-heart talk—I'm going to convince him that college can slip along very well without me, and that somewhere in this great big world there's some poor, forlorn fellow who's hunting for me, and I'm going to let him find me."

"Now, see here, daughter," was Mr. Fowler's initially uttered words when he had closed the door upon his wife and lighted a cigar and had walked back and forth the length of the room half a dozen times and made as many false starts to say what was uppermost in his mind. "Now, see here, your mother wants you to go to college and I want you to go, so there's no use of arguing the matter any further. It's settled, so



far as we're concerned and you might as well understand it—you'll start East next Monday afternoon."

"And leave that poor forlorn fellow who's hunting for me somewhere in this great big world, leave him to be snatched up by some other girl who doesn't know the difference between an infinitive and an affinity? I guess not, daddy—three months from now, you and I are going to walk up the aisle of our church and I'm going to have on a lovely white satin dress and you're going to look as miserable as you're going to feel—and when it's all over you'll come back to this very room and you'll smoke a cigar as you're doing now, and you'll feel that you'd like to murder some young man who's robbed you of the best little daughter that you've ever had!"

"Daughter, I tell you—" thundered Fowler.

"Daddy, I tell you—" cried Edna.

## CHAPTER II.

### DAUGHTER DECIDES.

"ALL right then, only for heaven's sake quit crying—if you won't go to college, I suppose you won't, and we'll forget all about it, only you've got to get the idea of getting married out of your foolish little head. Your mother 'll be disappointed, I'm sure—I almost hate to have to tell her," said Mr. Fowler exactly four minutes after his wife had left him.

"I'll tell her, daddy," suggested Edna.

"No—I've seen this thing through so far, and I might as well finish it—she'd sure to do a lot more crying than you've done—doggone it! I can't understand why you women always start in to cry when you can't have things just the way you want them. Mother!" and as he opened the door and called for his wife, Fowler, *père*, lifted another cigar from his box and lighted it, the meanwhile eying curiously his daughter who was radiantly happy and who was smiling, even if her eyes were red and even if her tiny handkerchief was saturated with the saline samples of her tyranny over her not-understanding parent.

"Mother," father Fowler commenced,

"Edna and I've been discussing this college affair and *we've* decided that she had better remain home, after all. I know it 'll be a great disappointment to you, but we've both of us got to realize that after all, it's for the best to have our dear girl with us instead of consigning her to the care and protection of a lot of professors and teachers that we don't know the first thing about."

"Oh, James, I'm *so* glad—so happy! I was afraid the poor child would decide to go to college after all—my precious, you don't know how happy I am that we're to have you with us!" And just to emphasize her sincerity, Mrs. Fowler kissed her beaming daughter as she held her to her breast for a full moment while the poor husband looked on, shaking his head and muttering to himself something about never being able to understand women folk, anyway.

A minute or so later, when Mr. Fowler had left the room to answer a telephone call, Mrs. Fowler led Edna over to a comfortable sofa and said: "Tell me, dear, however did you convince your father? I thought he was so determined upon your going to college that nothing would move him, and you know how set your dear father is when he makes up his mind about anything!"

And then Edna, holding a warning finger over her own lips a second, smiled happily as she murmured to her astonished mother: "The system, mother—it was my wonderful system—*Vive la system*"

Jim Harrison was one of the young men of Dalton who was popularly regarded as among the town's brightest and most promising business men. The sign above his hardware store declared that his name was James Harrison, but nobody had ever heard him called James, that is, within recent memory, because he was one of those likable chaps who are Jim or Jack or Bill to their friends and to their acquaintances.

Jim Harrison was summoned to the Fowler residence one evening for a conference with Mr. Fowler concerning some street improvements. And it was perfectly natural that Jim should be introduced to Mrs. Fowler—and equally as natural that he should also meet daughter Edna.

The street improvements that initially

had been the reason for Harrison going to the Fowler home continued to be his excuse for making half a dozen calls, and then one night when Mr. Fowler was not at home, Jim rang the door-bell—only this time he did not ask for the parental head of the house—rather, he inquired if Miss Edna were home.

The next morning, at breakfast, Edna naively remarked that Jim Harrison had been to the house the preceding evening.

"I'm sorry I missed him," declared Fowler, as he paused over the task of chopping open his customary four-minute egg.

"He didn't seem to be sorry," said Edna.

"I'll have to phone to him to call at the office and we'll go over the matter of the improvements without his bothering to come to the house, here."

"Don't do that, daddy," requested his smiling daughter, "and, anyway, I don't think Jim—that is, Mr. Harrison—ever thinks it is a bother to come here. You know, if you aren't home, I can talk with him."

"You don't know anything about these street improvements, child—no, I'll have him call at the office," announced Mr. Fowler, and there was, seemingly, a note of finality in his words.

"He seems to be a nice young man," admitted Edna.

"He is, I am sure," remarked Mrs. Fowler, joining the discussion anent young Mr. Harrison.

"You bet, Jim Harrison's a clever young fellow—as clever as there is in this town," declared Fowler.

"I'm so glad that you like him because he's going to be your son-in-law," said Edna, her eyes never being lifted from the plate in front of her.

"What's that? Jim Harrison? My son-in-law?" exclaimed Edna's thoroughly astonished, quite bewildered, completely amazed father.

"Edna!" cried her mother! "Surely you don't mean it?"

"Indeed, I do mean every word of it," calmly answered daughter Edna, only now she was looking directly at her father.

"This is the first thing I've heard about it," said Fowler.

"Yes," responded Edna, "Jim—that is, Mr. Harrison—doesn't know it himself—yet."

"What in Sam Hill are you driving at? You say Jim Harrison's going to be my son-in-law, but that he doesn't know it! What in thunderation *do* you mean?" demanded Edna's father, resorting to his best known polite cuss words.

"Edna, child, what *do* you mean?" added her mother's voice.

"I mean just this," said the daughter of the Fowler house. "Jim Harrison is a good looking young man—you tell me that he is clever—well, you ought to have a clever son-in-law to match up with your clever daughter, so I'm *going to make him propose!*"

"Yes, that's easy enough to say, but how—how are you going to do it?" queried her father.

"Oh, I've got a little system of my own," knowingly replied Edna.

"Have you and your mother been talking things over again?" asked Fowler.

"Well, I should say not—mother's too old-fashioned."

"Well, if you've made up your mind to do this thing, all that I can say is that I'm sorry for Jim Harrison if he tries to wiggle away from you," declared the head of the Fowler household.

"James! That's no way for you to talk about your own dear daughter!" admonished Mrs. Fowler.

"See that finger, father?" asked Edna as she held up a very important finger of her left hand for inspection.

"Yes," answered her father, "what's the matter with it?"

"Nothing much, except that in forty-eight hours there's going to be a diamond on it—and it'll be at least two carats, too," explained Edna, knowingly.

### CHAPTER III.

#### JIM BOASTS.

AT the very moment that Edna Fowler made her startling announcement to her parents, there were assembled at the Cosmos Club, Dalton's one and only



exclusive club, half a hundred of the town's representative and wealthiest young men, to celebrate the near-wedding of John Harvey, long regarded as a bachelor of the most confirmed sort.

As Harvey's best friend and as the best man at the forthcoming ceremony, Jim Harrison was seated in the toastmaster's chair and saw to it that the hilarity was properly supplied by the waiters, so that there never was an empty glass in front of any of the guests. Almost everybody had been declared: "He's all right—who's all right? *et cetera* and so forth, and a score of different college shrieks had been yelled, when in the midst of the uproar Jim Harrison arose and, rapping on a half-filled glass at his side with a fork, he demanded to be heard, and he was heard, something after the following fashion:

"I cannot help but declare myself, in the midst of this joyousness, a strong and firm believer in the theory of Bernard Shaw that in the game of matrimonial hare and hounds, Man is the pursued animal and Woman, dear, blessed Woman, is the pursuer.

"Now, I hate to say such a thing, but I'll just gamble that most of the married men in the world got themselves in their deplorable state because some designing, some clever woman proposed marriage to him while all the time the poor pup fondly imagined that it was *he* who did the proposing. And with this thought uppermost in my mind, I am going to ask if there are any married men here to-night who are truthful enough to stand up and tell us just what happened to him on that fateful night when he promised to lose his mind to the extent of wanting to pay a woman's board bill for the rest of her natural existence.

"Now, if there's any married man here to-night who's brave and honest enough to tell us the truth, I'll personally guarantee that he is protected during his relation of the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. I repeat, is there any married man in our midst who's got the courage to stand up and tell us the truth? Come on, you poor married fish!"

Three married men arose and each in

turn solemnly declared that he could not tell exactly what had occurred on the historic night he found himself with his arms circling the girl of his choice—but he had discovered the next morning that he was engaged!

"Well, I can tell you," glibly declared Jim Harrison. "You were all lured to your bachelor's ruin by your own designing wives-to-be—you were all led into positions that you either had to declare your intentions to marry the girl, or else forever hate yourself as a brute in human form—in short, three clever women led three simple-minded men, such as you have proved yourself to be, to the very edge of a high cliff and then gave you a sudden push, and the first thing you know you found yourselves in the abysmal habitat of the engaged young man."

"Oh, I say," interrupted one of the married trio, "aren't you putting it rather strong?"

"Am I?" asked Harrison. "Would you propose to your wife again, if you had to do it all over?"

"I'm not under oath," the man laughed, "and you can't make me incriminate myself, even on such a gay and festal occasion as this."

"Well, I'm against the whole scheme of letting girls drag us fellows into engagements to marry them—why, hang it all, a girl nowadays is as clever as a politician just before election, and I, for one, am going to fight them, fight them tooth and nail. I'd just like to see any girl grab hold of my mental coat-tails and say to me: 'See here, you, Jim Harrison, you're going to marry me and the sooner you do it, the better off you'll be.'"

Whereat half a hundred male voices chanted the belief that "You're all right, Jim—and we're with you—good old Jim Harrison—he's all right—who's all right?—Jim Harrison's all right."

And it was with this opinion of himself that he was all right, firmly implanted in his mind, that the next night Jim Harrison courageously and defiantly rang the Fowler bell and hoped to goodness that Edna Fowler was home and that her fussy old father, and everlastingly-in-the-way mother

were out visiting, or seeing a picture show, or doing something or other that would keep them out of his sight!

Strange to say, Edna had seen to it that her father and mother *were* out that night—and she had seen to it, too, that the stage was set as effectively as if a famous producer had been entrusted with the job.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### TEARS, KISSES, AND—

**E**DNA FOWLER never had professed to be much of a musician, but she had the faculty of evoking soft, strange, soothing minor melodies from her piano and on this particular evening she seemed to be in a singularly sad mood which was reflected in her music.

Jim Harrison, standing at her side, and ever ready to turn the sheets of music at her *nodded* command, had once or twice caught—or at least, thought he had caught—the faintest tremble of her upper lip, and on several occasions there had been an unusual quiver in her low-pitched voice, and her songs were of love, and then all of a sudden the girl's head dropped upon her folded arms on the keyboard of the instrument and she commenced to cry—not un-repressed torrents of tears, but soft, sobbing little cries and her little body shook slightly.

With the first evidence of tears, Jim Harrison, looming like a giant pine, looked down upon the agitated little body, and for the first time in all his life he felt hopelessly helpless. He quickly went over mentally everything he had said since he entered the Fowler home that night and for the life of him he could not recall a single word that might, could or should have caused Edna one teeny weeny tear. No, Jim assured himself to his great and complete satisfaction, *he* had done nothing to cause the outburst.

"What is it, Edna—er—er—I should say, Miss Fowler? Surely I haven't done or said anything to hurt you? You know I wouldn't do that for anything in the world."

Edna's only reply was a negatived shake

of the head and a greater and more prolonged flow of tears.

Jim stood it as long as he could and then, bending down a trifle and letting a hand drop upon Edna's shaking shoulder, he said once more: "You're sure it isn't I? You're certain that I haven't said or done anything to make you cry?"

"Don't—don't do that, please!" she murmured as she arose and, lifting Jim's hand from her shoulder, slowly walked to the opposite side of the room, crying the while as though her little feminine heart were on the verge of a collapse.

Jim hadn't particularly noticed that on the other side of the room was a generous-sized sofa. Nor did he perceive at first that Edna did not seat herself in the immediate center of that soft, but rather well toward an end.

What he did note was that she continued to weep—weep copiously and torrentially, as her small self rocked from one side to another, keeping time pendulously with each little, almost inarticulate "Oh!"

The big, clumsy hardware merchant stood at his post, at the side of the piano for a brief moment, scarce knowing what to do, what to say or where to go. Then, suddenly he determined that he was due to go to the rescue of the weeping girl—over there, on the other side of the room, and to Jim Harrison it seemed almost miles away when he started to walk the brief distance.

Even when he had seated himself at Edna's side, even when he had started two or three times to say something, to ask if there wasn't something he might do that would help to stem the flow of tears—even when his own eyes were steadfastly fixed upon the girl not six inches from himself—no, not even when his ears told him that there had been a momentary cessation in the sobbing, did he perceive that there was an Edna Fowler eye half opened, and peering between two of her fingers, and that this partially opened orb was cautiously, calmly and carefully noting the effect of her tears upon the big hulk of a human sitting there, so close to her. And when this slit between her fingers told her that Jim Harrison was not yet sufficiently impressed



Edna turned on her tears once more—turned them on full now, and her crying, her sobbing, little sighing “oh’s” caught the Harrison attention more closely than her previous efforts had.

Jim Harrison’s life chiefly had been spent among hardware—certainly none of his hours or months or years had been spent among jewelry, and this little girl at his side was a bit of feminine jewelry, he told himself, if there ever was such a thing. And any man placed in the same position probably—nay, certainly—would have done the very thing that Jim Harrison, the hardware merchant of Dalton, did.

What he did was to slowly—almost too slowly to please the weeping maiden—thrust a strong, muscled arm around the girl’s waist and gently draw her over to him. This, thought Jim, surely ought to ease the flow of tears—surely, it would make the girl understand that there was a sturdy arm always ready to defend her from whatever the confounded thing was that was causing her to cry—that in Jim Harrison she had a man who would fight for her, combat whoever, whatever was worrying her. But none of these comforting thoughts seemed to reach Edna, and even with Jim’s arm encircling her quivering body, she continued to cry all the more—it seemed as if there were a cloudburst of tears and that not even the presence of the big fellow whose other arm had gone to the rescue of its fellow and had completely entwined the unresisting little form, was sufficient to stop the tears.

As has just been remarked, Jim Harrison’s entire commercial life had been spent in a hardware store—now if this problem that his arms were around had only been a keg of nails, or even a coil of steel wire netting or anything of the sort with which he had been intimately associated, he would have known what to do—but here he found himself in a most embarrassing position—in a room with a lamp that was providing only a half light, seated on a comfortable sofa with his arms holding a girl who was crying as if her life were fast ebbing away!

Well, to Jim’s way of looking at the situation there was only one thing to do, and he proceeded to do it. He hated to—it was

something he had never before done in all his life, but it was distinctly up to him to do what he could to stop Edna Fowler’s misery, so Jim bent over a bit, drew Edna’s tear-wet face close to his own and—and then he kissed her!

You bet he did! He kissed her full on her mouth, but being an inexperienced kisser, he never noticed that her lips were frightfully salty and wet and warm. Give Jim Harrison all the credit that may be due to him—if he thought anything about the matter, he merely thought that all girls’ lips were salty and wet and warm.

Edna broke away from Jim’s arms. She jumped to her feet. Her crying ceased instantly. She looked pretty much like a frightened animal might that has received a blow from somebody it has regarded as its protector.

She opened her wet eyes full, and from them there seemed to Jim to come a flame of resentment. She did not speak for a moment and then she almost shrieked: “Oh, how dare you! How dare you kiss me!”

“Forgive me—please forgive me, Miss Edna—I didn’t know what I was doing—honestly, I didn’t—I just couldn’t help it—please believe me that I’m sorry. I know I had no right to.”

“How can I forgive you when you must hate me as you do for letting you do that—for letting you kiss me—oh, why did you—why did you?”

And then the tears once more were unleashed and once more what could poor Jim Harrison do but stand there a second and then fold the weeping miss unto him and nobody in the world can blame him if he again tilted Edna Fowler’s mouth to his and kissed her a second time—only this time his lips lingered longer than before because there seemed to come to him a responsive pressure of lips.

“Please don’t—please remember that you’re a great big, strong man, and can take advantage of me—and, oh, how I hate myself for letting you!” she cried out.

“Excuse me—I know I shouldn’t—my lips just seemed to skid, that’s all. I won’t again. I promise you I won’t,” Jim stammered.

“Oh, but you *did*, that’s what hurts me—

you *did* kiss me and you must just *hate* me for letting you—and *we're not even engaged!* Oh, what must you think of me!"

"Think of you? Why, dearest, I just think you're the sweetest, the most adorable, the most wonderful girl that ever lived—that's what I think of you," Jim exclaimed, and as his ears caught the sound of his lips he was quite astonished at his own bravery, his courage, his daring.

"You can't think that of me when I let you kiss me that way and when we're not *engaged*," and in the hope of a stronger protest Edna's handkerchief was called into use again, only this time when Jim Harrison caught up the little figure in front of him, he did not stop with a single kiss.

Rather, he lingered on those upturned lips longer than he should have, perhaps, if he had not said, as he released Edna for a very brief moment: "*You needn't say we're not engaged, because we are—that is, if you will consent to marry me—will you, sweetheart?*"

"Oh, Jim, I'm so afraid you don't love me—you do? Truly, you love me?" Edna asked chiefly to clinch the matter, rather than to satisfy her own mind.

"Love you, precious? I don't see how I've ever lived without you and your love," he answered, and of course having always understood that Jim Harrison was an honest, worthy young business man, she believed him.

## CHAPTER V.

A SHORT—AND DAMP—ONE.

**W**HEN Mother Fowler and Father Fowler were summoned to hear the gladsome news, much of Jim Harrison's bravado had worn off. He distinctly feared to meet his prospective parents-in-law.

"Let's not tell them now—some other night—to-morrow night, when I bring the ring will do," urged Jim.

But Edna was determined otherwise, and when it seemed as if Jim was going to prove bull-headed about such a trifling matter and when he had announced that it should be to-morrow night, and *not* to-night, Edna

brought forth her damp handkerchief and it seemed to Jim as if the weepy performance was to be gone all over again.

Indeed, Edna had cried a bit and she had declared that Jim *couldn't* love her the way he swore he did, when he sought to end the controversy by remarking: "Oh, all right—call them in, only *you* tell them—I haven't the nerve. What *will* your father think of me, when all the time he's thought I've been coming to discuss those street improvements with him?"

"Never mind what father thinks—or says—you leave him to me," answered Edna.

The first words that greeted the girl's parents were: "I'm so happy—Jim and I are engaged to be married, aren't we, Jim?" and Jim being asked to corroborate the statement nodded his head, affirmatively and eloquently declared: "That's right!"

Mrs. Fowler went over to Jim and planted a strictly motherly kiss upon his lips, while Edna sought her father's side, radiantly happy and smiling.

"How did you do it?" whispered Mr. Fowler.

"Sh!" admonished Edna, as she placed a finger over his lips. "Not so loud, father, dear."

"But *how*?" he persisted.

"The system—the wonderful system—it worked—*perfectly*—never skipped once!" she said in such a confidential voice that Jim's curiosity being aroused, he called out: "What are you two whispering about?"

Edna was just telling me how much she loves you," explained Mr. Fowler.

"I think I'm the luckiest fellow in all the world," joyously announced Jim.

"You bet you are," assented Pa Fowler knowingly and insinuatingly.

An hour later, as Jim Harrison was saying "good night" to his fiancée for the 'steenth time, and as his arms were protecting her from the entire world, Edna suddenly laid her head upon his shoulder and the tears streamed from her eyes and she sobbed convulsively.

Jim was dumfounded, perplexed, amazed. He knew he had not said or done anything to cause this latest flow of briny sorrow.



"What is it, dearest—aren't you happy?" he asked solicitously.

"Oh, Jim—I just can't stand the thought of it," Edna said, between her boo-hoos.

"What is it you can't stand?" he wanted to know.

"You've kissed other girls, and I can't stand the thought of it," she cried.

"Oh, pshaw!" Jim declared. "Nothing of the sort—anyway, I've never been engaged to marry anybody but you—honestly, I haven't."

"You kiss entirely too beautifully for an amateur," Edna asserted.

"How do you know?" Jim hurried to inquire.

"I'm a woman—and a woman *knows!*" she explained.

"I'll say that you're a wonderful woman!"

"Don't ever let me catch you kissing any other girl," said Edna, and in her voice there was the vestige of a threat.

"I hope you won't," replied the Benedict-elect.

"Oh, dear, I'm so happy, I almost feel like crying again!" Edna declared when Jim was half-way down the front steps of the Fowler home.

"Please don't—please don't ever cry again," said the allegedly clever young man, who but a short twenty-four hours before had announced that he didn't propose to let any girl grab hold of his mental coat-tails.

"Why, the very ideal!" gasped Edna, who was so astonished at the singular request that she nearly forgot to reply to Jim Harrison's wigwag of eternal devotion, signaled from half a block up the street.

## CHAPTER VI.

### WANTED—"CRYING ANNIE."

FOR their honeymoon Jim had selected a hotel known far and wide for its exclusiveness—one of those hotels whose stationery is rather good evidence of its altitudinous standing in hotel-dom. Jim had neglected to notify anybody as to the destination of the newlyweds and just to make sure that they would hit upon the right one, a happy-minded quartette of Jim's personal

and business friends who had done service as ushers sent telegrams to every hotel within a radius of one hundred miles at which the newly married young people might be found.

These telegrams carried the name of Frank Sheridan, the sheriff of the Luzerne County, in which the town of Dalton was situated, and they furthermore carried the information that headed for this particular hotel was a pair of undeniably clever hotel thieves, one of whom—the female—was known in polite police circles as "Crying Annie," and explained that whenever in a tight corner and threatened with capture or anything of the sort, she invariably resorted to a flood of tears.

Her partner, so the telegram announced, was likely to try and pass himself off for a newly married man, and might vouchsafe the information that he and the criminally inclined Crying Annie were on their honeymoon—that this was the favorite pose of the pair of desperate hotel thieves.

And just to inspire a trifle more energy than the hotel people otherwise might display, the telegram concluded with the interesting statement that Sheriff Sheridan, of Luzerne County, had offered a reward of three thousand dollars for the capture of Mr. and Mrs. Crying Annie.

The very idea of a pair of criminally inclined people endeavoring to seek refuge in his hostelry was quite sufficient for Manager Harding, of the Farview Hotel, to notify his staff of clerks to be on the lookout for the young man and young woman mentioned in Sheriff Sheridan's telegram, but the declaration that a reward of three thousand dollars was a possibility heightened the Harding interest in keeping a managerial eye upon the newly arrived visitors to the Farview, and more especially all youngish-looking couples.

Therefore, it was not so singular, perhaps, that when Mr. and Mrs. James Harrison entered the Farview lobby they instantly were the center of interest from every employé within sight. Jim rather proudly stepped up to the desk, took the proffered pen from the clerk, and wrote on the register of the hotel: "Mr. James Harrison, Dalton." Then turning to make certain

that his newly acquired Edna had not vanished from his side, he found her bending over his shoulder to note the registration.

"Dearest, you haven't forgotten me—not so soon, have you?" she asked.

"Precious one, I never can forget you," sugarily replied Jim.

"But you *have* forgotten me—on the register, I mean," she pointed out as she called his attention to the sheet that contained the list of arrivals at the hotel.

"Gee—so I have!" he exclaimed and, grasping the pen from its potato habitat, Jim hurried to add, after his own name: "And wife."

This absent-mindedness on Harrison's part was, perhaps, nothing especially new to the hotel clerk, for he never indicated the slightest interest in the happening, preferring to show his concern in the young people on the other side of the desk by the inquiry: "I suppose you prefer the bridal suite?"

"Oh, I guess so—yes, that will do very nicely," answered Jim as nonchalantly as he was able to.

When the grinning bell-hop had deposited their bags, and raised the curtains in the room and flooded the place with the early evening moonlight—for it now was in the neighborhood of eight o'clock—had seen that the water in the bath was in its usual running order, had pulled open the drawers of the ornate writing-desk and otherwise behaved in typical bell-boy fashion until reminded of duties elsewhere by Jim's silver remembrance and departed with a smiling request that: "If they's anything else you want, you can telephone and I'll hurry right up"—then and not until then, did Mrs. James Harrison make an effort to find her voice.

There was a tremble that presaged a worry of an unusual sort as she sided up to her all-knowing husband and asked: "Jim—Jim, dear—how—how do you suppose that horrid old clerk knew we were just married and wanted the bridal suite?"

Jim, bending over his traveling-bag and hunting vainly for his hair-brushes, without taking the trouble to look up, said: "How do you suppose I know?"

"There! There! I just knew it all the

time. I told mother, too. Oh, I wish I'd never married you!" cried the young bride as she threw herself upon the bed.

"Now, what's the matter—what's the matter with you now?" asked Jim, and there was a lack of husbandly affection in his voice.

"I asked you a question and you replied like a brute. I knew you would. I knew you'd be like every other man, only I *hoped* you wouldn't," she managed to make him hear between her sobs.

"You'd better quit that crying—if you don't, the whole house 'll hear you and the first thing we know, we'll be put out—and *then*—then, you'd *have* a good reason to blubber!" was the brute's unfeeling retort.

"Oh, I just knew I was going to hate you. I told mother before we left home that I was sure to, and *now I do!*" announced the weeping bride of a few hours as her tears came faster and her sobbing louder and more frequent.

Suddenly Edna sat upright and her tears ceased instantly.

"What's that?" she asked.

"It sounds as if somebody's knocking on the door, if you must know," he answered, as he went over to the door that led to the hall.

What Edna Harrison, née Fowler, saw as she wiped her wet eyes with her handkerchief was a portly gentleman who had announced that his name was Harding and that he was the manager of the hotel. And immediately in Manager Harding's rear was an athletic-looking young fellow—evidently one of those college fellows who donate their services to resort hotels during their vacation periods each summer.

That was what Edna Harrison, née Fowler, saw.

What she *heard* was:

"You'll have to get out of this hotel." This was from the portly gentleman, who just a second or so previously had described himself as the manager of the Farview.

"What's the matter? We've just arrived," answered Jim, and as he spoke he looked as if he would like nothing better than a chance to test his athletic prowess with the college-looking chap who stood half grinning behind his employer.



"This is no retreat for criminals," declared the hotel man.

"You calling me a criminal?" demanded Jim.

"Yes, if you can understand the English language."

"If you say that again, I'll land you one on the jaw!"

"You'll do nothing around here except to get your things together and get out of my hotel—and I'll give you exactly five minutes in which to make your exit."

"Nothing stirring," said Jim as he made a move to close the door. This, however, had been anticipated by Mine Host Harding, whose extended right foot prevented the Harrison strategical maneuver to bring the talk to a conclusion.

"Then, sir, consider yourself and your fellow criminal under arrest, because as a deputy sheriff, I hereby declare you to be duly placed under arrest, to be confined separately until the arrival of the sheriff of Luzerne County.

"You mean Frank Sheridan—the sheriff?" hurriedly asked Jim.

"Yes, Sheriff Sheridan, of Luzerne County," corroborated the hotel man.

"S-a-ay, you fat-head! Can't you see a joke when it comes right up to you and shakes you by the hand? Don't you understand that this is all a huge joke? Some of our fool friends trying to bother us because we've just been married?" Jim demanded.

"I don't know anything about a joke—all that I know is this telegram, notifying me that a desperate pair of criminals are headed this way and will likely want to stop at my hotel," and as he spoke the manager held out the troublesome telegram, but quickly withdrew it when Jim's hand shot out in an effort to obtain the bit of yellow paper.

## CHAPTER VII.

### WEEPING THEIR WAY.

UP to this moment Edna had been a silent witness of what had been happening at the door. But she thought that this particular point in the case was the right one for her to break into the dis-

cussion, and she forthwith proceeded to do so, with a shriek of "O, Jim!"—and then followed a torrent of tears and vocal noises that were supposed to be sobs, but which resembled more an incipient cyclone of feminine fury and resentment.

So far as Manager Harding and his clerk were concerned, this interruption of tears was sufficient to establish the identity of the alleged criminals. "Ah, ha! I thought so—see, the telegram said the girl was known in police circles as 'Crying Annie.'"

"Yay-yah! And if you ask me, I'll say that she is some crier, too!" remarked the clerk.

"Here, Mac, get this fellow down in the office and stay with him—see that he doesn't get away until the sheriff arrives—and if he doesn't you get a bit of the three thousand reward—if he does, you lose the job you have around this hotel," and as the hotel proprietor stopped speaking there loomed from behind the clerk the huge hulk of a two-hundred-pound, six-feet-two inch Irishman, who evidently was accustomed to massaging trunks and the like and who, thus far in his career, had not learned the meaning of the word "careful," because he just reached out one long arm, grasped Jim Harrison by his coat-collar and, giving him a sudden yank, brought him in the fraction of a second from the interior of the bridal suite of the Farview out into the half-darkened hallway.

Five minutes later Jim Harrison was occupying a swivel-chair in the rear office of the hotel, and, sitting opposite him, and puffing contentedly on a terrible smelling pipe, was Mac, the hotel porter, and in his eye was a gleam that seemed to mutter: "You try and get out of this place—I dare you to try to!"

Jim remained silent for a quarter of an hour, planning some clever bit of strategy by which he might make his escape; but Mac, his faithful keeper, merely sat there, puffing, puffing, puffing on his blackened pipe.

"What are you trying to do—gas me?" was Jim's first utterance.

Puff, puff, puff, puff!

"Hey! Won't you stop that confounded stink?" Jim next said.

Puff, puff, puff, puff!

"Can I get a drink around this place?" he then tried.

Puff, puff, puff, puff!

From his inside pocket, Jim drew a bulky wallet. Opening it, he pulled out five twenty-dollar bank-notes and spread them on the table at his side, fan-fashion. "Know what these are?" he inquired.

Puff, puff, puff, puff!

"That money belongs to *you*—it's yours if you let me get out of here," Jim declared.

"I know the money's mine, and I'm taking it," quietly said Mr. Mac, "but if you try and get out of here, you'll be headed straight for the hospital."

"But, hang it all! I'm on my bridal tour—my wife's upstairs—I suppose she's half scared to death, and all because your fool boss can't understand a joke when he meets one."

"You quit calling Mr. Harding a 'fool' or I'll forget that he said I was to be nice and kind to you," and as Mac spoke he proceeded to empty the bowl of his pipe, only, however, to immediately refill it with another mixture of the particular brand of alfalfa he so dearly loved.

"How long are you going to keep me here?" queried Jim.

"Till the sheriff comes and pays us the three thousand reward, of course."

"But don't you understand that there's *no* sheriff and that there's *no* reward?" almost shrieked Jim Harrison in his anger.

"I suppose there ain't—but just the same, you're going to stay here with me until the sheriff comes."

At this moment the door of the office opened and there entered the hotel man, Mr. Harding. On his face was a look of distinct worry and concern. He did not wait long to make known the object of his presence.

"See here, you—you've got to make that woman you say is your wife quit crying—she's bawling so loud that everybody on the floor is kicking."

"You ask her, and perhaps she'll stop," suggested Jim with a trace of irony in his words.

"Hell—don't you suppose I did ask her

—didn't I threaten to have her put in the laundry, away back of the furnace-room, but that only made her yell the louder. Now, young fellow, you've *got* to make her stop that consarned blubbering, and do it quick, too."

"I don't care how much she cries, I can't hear it down here, so why should I interfere—perhaps she likes to cry—maybe it's her one particular pleasure."

"You don't want everybody to leave the hotel, do you?"

"It isn't my hotel, so why should I care if people remain or go?"

"But, man alive! It 'll ruin the reputation of the Farview, and if I do say it myself, there isn't a more fashionable or refined hotel this side of the Rocky Mountains."

"I know it—that's why I selected it for my honeymoon."

"Now, see here, neighbor—you've got to come to my rescue—you've *got* to do something to make your wife quit that awful noise."

"There's only one thing that can make her stop crying—she's subject to these attacks when she's excited and there's only one thing that 'll stop them."

"And that is—"

"Fresh air, and plenty of it."

"I'll have every window in her room opened."

"Yes, and let her crying be heard all the plainer, eh?"

"That's so."

"You're a business man and, I trust, a reasonable human. I'll tell you what I'll do, forget all about this tom-fool joke of our being criminals—let me and my wife go on our way, weeping, not rejoicing, and you will quickly eliminate all trouble."

"If I do that, I'll lose the three thousand reward."

"And if you don't you'll lose all your guests—now which do you prefer?"

"You're on—you're sure she'll stop crying?"

"I guarantee that she will—if she doesn't you can hand us over to Sheriff Sheridan and I'll personally add another thousand to his three thousand."

Half an hour later, as Mr. and Mrs. Jim Harrison rode away from the Farview



Hotel in their touring-car—Jim had an idea that this would be the ideal motive power for their fortnight of honeymoon bliss—Edna cuddled close to him and almost made him run into a tree at the side of the road when she clutched his arm with more strength than he supposed any girl possessed.

"And they won't come after us?" she wanted to know.

"I guess not," remarked Jim, striving to keep the roadway.

"If they do, I'll just cry—I'll *have* to."

"I *hope* they won't," muttered the brute more to himself than to his bride.

"What did you say, dearest?" she asked.

"I only said: 'Nope, they won't,'" and then and there was recorded the first deception that Jim Harrison ever practised on the sweet young thing he had sworn to love and protect—but not always tell the truth to.

## CHAPTER VIII.

"BOO-HOO—"

**N**OW, anybody who has had much experience with cook ladies in these days knows very well that temperamental personages such as the good women who labor in our kitchens must be handled pretty much after the same fashion that successful motion-picture manufacturers handle their highly paid stars.

You can't talk to a cook as you would to one of your social equals. Cook ladies demand a certain degree of importance that one need not confer upon one's friends. Edna Fowler-Harrison, now half a dozen months married, failed properly to appreciate this very stubborn fact and when peeved she spoke words that, while they are to be found in every unabridged catalogue of the mother tongue, seldom are made use of when one is conversing with a dignitary of the culinary department.

So, by reason of this wifely error, the Harrison kitchen had known a procession of arrivals and departures, with usually but a single week intervening between the "hellos" and the "good-byes." Once, when a cook had stayed with them for an entire

fortnight, Jim very proudly announced that they had a permanent boarder at their home!

"What is it, boy or a girl, and how's the wife doing?" was the very natural query of the friend to whom Harrison had spoken to.

"No—nothing of the sort—what I meant was that we had a cook who's a fixture—anyway, she's been with us sixteen days and I hope she'll remain until the end of her month, although that's almost too much to hope for."

But only that same evening when Jim arrived home his own dear, sweet wife announced with tears in her eyes: "Honey, I've got terrible news for you, and I just hate to tell you!"

"There, never mind, dearest, we can get another cook—we *always* do," he said.

"Why—why—who told you?" she asked in sheer amazement.

"Nobody, only I've been expecting it for the last ten days—she was too good to be true, she was, even if her name was Delilah."

"Jim?"

"Yeah, honey bunch."

"Jim, I've decided to do my own cooking—not to have to depend upon these old cooks."

"All right, officer, shoot if you must! I'll be as brave as I can," was Jim's only answer.

When Jim found that his next evening's dinner had as its masterwork a flock of eggs of the four-minute variety, surrounded by biscuit so beautifully browned as to testify as to their bakery parentage, and a pot of coffee of the sort that you make in an instant by pouring a sufficient quantity of steaming water over the pulverized Brazilian product, he covertly made up his mind that later on, that evening, he would find it necessary to go back to his office—and then later, well, there was a cafeteria open until midnight and Jim never had thought himself too good to tote his own platter around in front of him, while he pointed out the dishes he liked.

It was only when Jim had broken the shell of one of his eggs that he evinced a dislike for hen food—for this particular egg,

anyway. He sniffed of it a brief second, and then certain that his nostrils had not played him false, he held the eloquent egg as far from him as his arm would permit of.

"Take it—take it out and give it a decent burial," he managed to mutter.

"Isn't it good?" his young wife asked.

"Just about as good as a pair of deuces against a pair of aces—but no better."

"Oh, dear me!" Edna exclaimed. "And I told the grocer man to be sure and send me the best cold-storage eggs he had—you know mother always puts her eggs in the refrigerator for storage, so I *knew*!"

"I know you *knew*—and I *know* now, too, and if you want to make me love you forever and ever you'll collect these things you call eggs and put them in a bag and I'll see that the undertaker gives them a proper interment."

"You mean you aren't going to eat them, after all the bother and trouble I've been put to, to get them boiled exactly as you like them?" she wanted to know.

"As a mind-reader you're a six-cylinder triumph," responded Jim quite unfeelingly, as he arose to hide the offending creature of the cold-storage system somewhere so it might not disturb the neighborhood.

"You're making fun of me—and all because I've tried to help you by getting along without a horrid old cook," Edna cried out and as she ceased to speak she, too, arose, but it was only for the purpose of procuring her handkerchief and a second later the misunderstood, the quite unappreciated young wife was pouring out her great and poignant grief into the said mouchoir, while Jim looked on a moment, and then, without saying a word, planted himself in the most comfortable chair in the room, lighted a cigarette and opened the evening paper.

"Boo-hoo," squawled the sob-racked Edna, "boo-hoo—you don't love me—no-body loves me!"

"Sure, somebody loves you—God loves you, only He doesn't have to put up with you as I have to," was the unsympathetic response that came from the smoke-encircled monster in the comfortable arm-chair.

"Oh, how I hate you! I never want to see you again. *I'm going home to mother!*"

"Oh, very well, only when you come

back, you'll find me here," and saying which, Jim stretched his arms in the air and said something about guessing he'd go down-town and get something to eat, but whether he did so or not, was not exactly clear to Edna, who watched her six-months-husband go through the door leading to the street and he never said "good-by," nor offered to implant his lips against her own.

Plainly the system had slipped a cog. Something was radically wrong with her technique. Good gracious, she thought, if her tears were to prove unavailing, what was she to do?

Do? She'd *do* something. She'd show him! She said she was going back to her mother and she wasn't going to have Jim Harrison think she was bluffing. She *would* go back! She'd return to her old home that very evening—right away—and when Jim came home that night he'd quickly understand that when his wife said anything, she *meant* it!

"Mother!" said Edna into the telephone-receiver a few moments later. "Mother, I've got such good news for you—I've had a quarrel with Jim, and I'm coming home to live with you and dear father—no, I've made up my mind that I never want to see him again—he's too horrid for anything—I never want to speak to a man again."

"But you mustn't go out! You must wait until I come. I need you and daddy more than any one in the world and you've just got to love me and protect me from this man who calls himself my husband. But, mother, listen mother dear, you've just *got* to stay home to-night and it doesn't make any difference what the Brownings say. They can get another couple for their stupid old bridge game. I'll be right over, and I'm never, never going to leave you and dear old daddy again."

And then, when she had hung up the transmitter, the youthful wife hesitated a moment, and stood motionless, immersed in thought. Then, suddenly again, she was all action. "I'll show him!" she announced with a sternness in her voice that was altogether unusual.

Two hours later when Jim Harrison arrived at the Fowler home, he was greeted at the door by Edna's father, who winking



knowingly, said, a bit sympathetically: "She's all right, now, Jim—just a case of nerves, I guess—these women *do* get funny notions every once in a while. You'll forget it?"

"Sure—there's nothing to forget," Jim answered.

"Oh, Jim—I've been waiting hours and hours for you. I just thought you were never coming, didn't I, mother?" was his wife's greeting.

"We've had such a wonderful visit from our little girl," announced her mother, and the smile that was upon her lips and the glad light that was in her eyes made it apparent that she was not overstating the case.

"I've got a taxi waiting, so you'll excuse us if we seem to hurry away?" Jim asked.

"Isn't Jim just the thoughtfulest husband that ever was?" asked Edna.

"I'm coming over and help with the housework for a little while—until we can find you a good girl," announced Mrs. Fowler.

"Yes, and Jim, they've decided that we're all to eat our dinners over at your place—for a while, anyway," added Fowler, *père*.

"The first thing you know, I'll bet that Edna can bake better bread than her own mother," laughed Jim as he and the young woman at his side said their "good nights."

## CHAPTER IX.

### WELCOME TEARS OF WELCOME.

**W**HEN Edna Harrison had decided that she'd show her hubby what was what, she had taken her certain feminine articles of wearing apparel, and these had been placed in a small hand-bag. Jim had carried this bag on their return home and as he helped his clinging life-partner up the one flight of stairs to their cozy living-room and after he had propped her up with great soft pillows that almost completely hid her, he opened the hand-bag and commenced to take therefrom numerous and divers dainty things that are so dear to the womanly heart.

At last, the bag was empty, save for a small bundle, encircled with a blue silken

ribbon. In some typically clumsy, masculine way, as Jim was removing this mysterious bundle from the bag, it burst its silken confines and fell to the floor, the contents scattering about Jim's feet.

Picking up the several bits of filmy material, curiously small and equally curiously shaped, and inspecting them with much frowning and wonder, Jim asked, innocently enough: "What in the world are these funny things for?"

"Oh, Jim," Edna exclaimed, as she thrust out one hand to regain possession of her silken treasures, "give them to me—please do—don't look at them again—please don't—you mustn't look at them—*really*, you *mustn't!*"

"I won't let you have them until you tell me what they are, and what they're for," Jim replied, tantalizingly.

"But you *must!*" his little wife declared.

"But I *won't!*" Jim asserted, "anyway, not until you tell me what they are."

"Please do," she pleaded.

"You please do," he retorted.

"Well then, but I think you're just horrid about it all," and then the little woman reached up until her hands reached Jim's ears and then she slowly drew down his head until the same enslaved ears were on a level with her pouting lips, and then she whispered into those ears something—something that must have been wonderfully interesting, because the great big husband caught the slight figure in front of him in his arms and almost shouted, in his happiness: "Honestly?"

"Uhuh!" she answered. "Only I didn't want you to know—*yet!*"

"Isn't that just the greatest thing that ever happened?" Jim wanted to know.

"Yes, dearest, and I'm so happy that I could almost *cry!*" she declared.

"That's all right, little girl, if you want to cry, you just go ahead and cry all you want to and it'll be all right, and I'll hold you close, in my arms, and I'll kiss away all the tears, afterward, while you tell me once more that most wonderful story."

*Did she cry?*

Sure, she did—who had a better right? And besides, Jim didn't seem to mind.

(The end.)

# House of the Hundred Lights

by J.U. Giesy and Junius B. Smith

Authors of "The Ivory Pipe," "Stars of Evil," "The Black Butterfly," etc.

## (A SEMI DUAL STORY)

### CHAPTER XXIV.

#### THE DOOR OF THE BLUE LAMP.

I FELT better after my cry as a woman will. I got up, undressed and went to bed. And after that I lay there thinking the whole thing out.

Popoff had guilty knowledge. His remark about Milly's having been released for lack of proof showed it. And my message had gone out. Thanks to Milly's tip, I could see how my friends on the outside worked. Mr. Glace, who was not well known to Popoff or his people, was himself, acting as a sort of go-between. He went to Milly's home, and from there, of course, he carried the word to Semi-Dual and Billy.

I wondered what they would learn about McDowd, the man Popoff said he had trained. And that thought made me clench my hands. He had said the man came to them a wreck, and he had treated him and then employed him. In God's name, I asked myself, what had they done to the man's brain, with their perverted knowledge of the nervous system, and their hellish system of lights. And what, I asked myself, also would they do to me if they knew the truth? I don't really think I was afraid, but—there was no use in denying that Milly's reappearance had excited some sort of question in Popoff's mind—and I could at least imagine my fate if

what was no more than a vague fear, perhaps, should become a conviction in his shrewd and merciless brain.

Then came the thought of Semi-Dual's assurance that if I was in danger all I need do was to think of him strongly. It was an odd thought, and yet it afforded me comfort. After all, it would be to do consciously with him what I had done unknowingly more than once with Daddy Drew before. I began to recall the times I had unconsciously sent my thoughts to him, when I had wished he would bring home something, and he had done it—when he was away, his thought had come to me saying he was coming home, long before word of it arrived or he appeared. And from that I drifted into a doze, and from a doze into sleep. So I passed my second night in the House of a Hundred Lights and waked to a day in the course of which nothing at all occurred.

But the second seance of the week took place that night. I meant to attend it, and I meant to be all eyes. By now I knew what to expect in the way of light effects, and I felt I would be in a better condition to watch, though I didn't know what for, of course. That was one of the difficulties of my task from the start—there was a vague intangible quality about the undertaking from the first. It was only because I was assured there was something there if I could find it that I wasn't discouraged.

This story began in the All-Story Weekly for May 22.



But I knew it was there somewhere concealed under the mask of all that brilliant theory concerning the use of lights.

I entered the auditorium early and found a seat where I was not much exposed to observation, and could still command practically the entire room. I watched the audience gather, very much as before, quite a lot of society people, and a lesser number of middle class and even lower than middle class women and men, if one were to judge by their personal appearance and their clothes.

Popoff appeared and made his talk. The meeting went off very much as the one two nights before had gone. The color projectoscope was used, the piano number was played in connection with the screen. The flood of varicolored lights came down from the ceiling—red, orange—yellow—the last as before maintained for some considerable time, before it changed to blue and then went green. Quite naturally I watched each change as best I could. Again I observed Popoff's absence from the stage, as the green light faded and Miss Mier prepared to sing. Then as she began her preliminary speech, I glanced about the room and my heart began throbbing in an almost choking fashion. I *had* discovered something after all. For, unless I was wholly mistaken—not only Popoff himself, but a part of the audience as well, was gone!

I stared. There had been a row of seats—almost the last with which the hall was furnished—and there had been men in those seats so far as I could recall when the seance began. But now—the seats were vacant—their occupants had vanished.

The lights went out!

Gladys Mier began her song. The sympathetic flashing of color complements to her voice from the lamps in the ceiling commenced. They were hardly more startling than my thoughts. For I had seen—or I believed I had seen—one more of the queer, the baffling things, that went on in this house. Popoff had left the stage, and the men in the rear row of seats had disappeared and—there was some connection—there must be some connection between

the two facts. With an almost stifling feeling, it seemed to me that I was beginning to understand—not fully, of course, but vaguely. Popoff had left the stage after calling for the green light. And those others had gone some time since the seance began unless my eyes had tricked me—either in the periods when the room was darkened, or during the intervals when it was filled with a flood of color that dazzled the vision. They had simply risen and slipped out across the heavy carpet, which even here in the auditorium covered the entire sweep of the floor and deadened noise.

Noise. My perception quickened. The playing of a piano was noise of a sort—the sound of a singer's voice would also perhaps mask the sound of moving feet. And—and—the yellow light had been kept on longer than the others, and followed not by green but by blue, and there had been a singer to distract attention. And after that—I began to breathe more quickly there in the color-shot darkness. I clenched my hands in a sudden exultation—after that Popoff called for green and vanished.

I was positive now that I knew when the men in the last row of seats had disappeared. And beyond that I was positive of something else. Those men had gone, wherever Popoff had gone to meet them. Meet them—oh, yes, the whole thing was coming clear.

I quivered as I sat there under the flashing, darting stabs of light. It was a meeting, of course. My breath seemed choked back into my breast—a meeting! I became aware that I was panting with the realization of what all I had discovered meant. More and more as the song went on and the lamps winked and flashed and wove their warp and woof of color there in the House of the Hundred Lights—in that wonderful mansion of trickery, hypocrisy and deceit, that used the patronage of those who entered its doors to pay the operating expenses of its real, its true and nefarious purpose—I began to understand.

These seances might be, as Miss O'Brien had intimated in almost cynical fashion, the bait that drew neurasthenics—especially neurotic women of leisure—through its

door—but more than that, they were a mask, an unbelievable bit of subtle “cover” to what went on unknown somewhere inside the walls. They were a blind, a something to trick even a suspicious mind, as effectually as those floods of blinding color tricked the eyes. And they would have tricked even a suspicious mind or eye, I felt sure now as I began to understand all the fiendish cleverness, the knowledge of human mind and body behind it, unless that mind had come here, even as I had come, forewarned and so forearmed. And for that—for that—as two nights before I felt a sob struggling with me for expression—for that, I could thank Semi-Dual, the strange man who had called me the other night to his unsuspected dwelling—on a roof.

Unbelievable, uncanny, weird! It all came to seem like that as I sat there and pondered what I had seen—and the lights played their symphony of color in response to the singer's voice. And yet—not only did I believe, I was assured, and I waited for the song to end and the ordinary light to return that I might once more inspect that row of seats, and so be doubly assured that I was right.

And even then the thing checked. I went a step farther. This was the beginning of Popoff's “color concert,” in which number followed number as time went on. Why, I asked myself, was there any need of a prolongation of the musical performance when the real demonstration was done? Why, indeed—unless to gain time for whatever was being put forward in the place to which those missing men and Popoff, their leader, had gone.

I smiled—yes, smiled, as the thought came to me—and I thanked the man who had paid the price of his life as a final sacrifice to the duty he would not discredit—to my father—for those long, long talks into which he had drawn me—for the development of that power of deductive thought which they seemed to have developed in my mind, the ability to realize that even as the play of lights were the cover for their escape from the room, so the concert was the mask to the time of their meeting.

Abruptly the lights went out as on the former occasion, and Gladys Mier sang her final song. When it was done, Popoff was there smiling to say his little farewell speech, and—I glanced again at the row of seats, to find them filled. Their occupants had returned!

It was the last point needed to round the problem. Once more I trembled from sheer emotion. I had now everything I needed. The whole thing was plain! They had come back—those men who had vanished—slipping into their places during the space of darkness—the sound of the woman's song. And—they would leave openly—as the audience streamed forth. Actually they had accomplished in seeming at least the impossible feat of being in two places at once. They had been present at the beginning of the seance—they had been present at its end—and they left with the others who were leaving, mingling with them, a part of the audience in appearance. Ah, well, Semi-Dual had said there was a diabolical cleverness back of what was going on—and I had seen. But—as I climbed the stairs to my yellow room, I knew I must see much more, and I mean to return.

But as I waited for the opportunity to do what I had determined to do, I am not ashamed to confess that for the first time, I was really a little afraid. There was no longer any doubt in my mind that the House of the Hundred Lights was an anarchistic stronghold—what the police would have called a “hang out of reds.” And though I did not falter in the plan I had formed, I knew just about how far I might go.

I found a small flash-light in my trunk, provided against any need in advance. I slipped off my ordinary clothing and put on a dark kimono—a soundless thing. I removed my shoes and slipped on a pair of felt-soled slippers in which I might move without the slightest noise. And then I waited—waited while an hour passed and midnight came and the house grew more and more quiet; until after an eternity as it seemed my watch told me it was one o'clock and time my task was begun.

For I meant to go back to the auditorium itself and seek if I might to learn the way



the men in the last row had quitted the room after leaving their seats.

Of course I had a clue. To begin with, I felt sure they would not have passed out of the main door. And remember the play of colors in the light floods from the ceiling, red, orange, yellow—the entire lower end of the spectrum. The eyes of the audience were practically blinded for the moment to the low half of the scale of colors, by being exposed to their particular vibrations showered over them in an especially intense wave for a certain time. More than that, the yellow light had been maintained for a longer time than the others, and was followed by its complement blue and Gladys Mier's first song. And—the curtains in the rear of the room were orange and yellow. If you have followed this description and recall what Semi-Dual had said and done that Sunday night in his quarters, you can see at once why I had a fairly strong suspicion as to the direction in which the men had gone.

Gathering my kimono about me, I took my torch and turned the knob of my door. So far as I could see, there was no sign of life in the hall, although a dim night light threw a yellow shimmer along it, marking out distinctly the head of the stairs. I had put out my own light, and now I slipped outside and went as rapidly as I might toward the stair head—gained it without hindrance or discovery in so far as I knew, and began creeping down—almost holding my breath lest one of the treads should squeak.

But I might have spared myself that worry. Squeaks and noises were seemingly the last thing desired in that wretched place. They had been guarded against in every possible way, and for any noise I evoked as I went lower and lower down them, the stairs might have been as solid as the earth.

So in the end I reached the bottom without mishap, yet with my heart hammering rather heavily beneath my breast. I was afraid Popoff might still be in his office, but though I listened intently, I heard no sound of life. Turning off, I fled, almost running now toward the door of the auditorium as toward a refuge—yearning all

at once for the cover of the darkness I felt would shroud it—enable me to breathe free of possible observation—and of course to finish my work.

Actually I presume there was nothing so particularly adventurous in what I was doing, but to me—the possible peril of my position seemed very real at the time. As a matter of fact, though, as I realize now, my safety lay in Popoff's having taken me at face value. I would not be writing this present narrative had he suspected at that time. But, of course, I didn't know how much or how little he suspected then—and I knew I was playing the spy in the house of a callously criminal man. And so I ran toward the cover of the darkened hall, with a rather fluttering heart.

I reached the door, set it gently open, and passed through it to find myself in the darkness of a tomb. The original windows, whatever there were, had been bricked up and the draping curtains gave the place an atmosphere of absolutely lightless gloom. But I didn't mind it. In fact as I have indicated, it was grateful, and I found a seat and sank down upon it, resting for a few moments, utterly safe, now, as I felt, from observation, before I began my search for an invisible means of exit from the place.

And as I sat there, I found myself marveling at the way in which the entire scheme, back of the need of that exit, I now felt sure existed, had been worked out—at the insight into human nature displayed in its every detail, at the depths of thought exercised in the preparation on such a scale for the perpetration of its purpose, so that the very elaborateness of the preparation in itself became a disguise, baffling alike to so much as even suspicion in the average mind. It was shown in everything around me—that forethought of detail—it was shown even in the fact that the men I had detected in their absence, occupied the last row of seats in the room, and that it was the back of the room where the orange and yellow curtains hung.

That in itself showed knowledge of the penchant of crowds, gatherings, audiences, to herd together in public places. In addition, of course, and working in harmony with that point was the further advantage

that their exit was less likely to court notice if made in silent fashion during the time when the blue light was on and Gladys Mier was singing on the stage. Oh, yes—just as a scheme, one had to admit it clever. I rose.

The button of my search-light pressed down, sent a tiny ray of light before me to end in a wavering patch on the heavy carpet of the floor. I went toward the yellow and orange curtains at the rear. They were heavy things, of velvet—soundless like all else, even when one disturbed their soft piled folds. I reached them and began feeling along them for a break in the expanse they offered to my touch. I knew it must be there—was sure of it—and I found it—about midway of the rear wall, back of the center aisle of the hall, in the most natural situation in the world. I drew the folds aside and gazed through the break at the circle my torch made against a plastered wall.

And then I slipped through to find myself in a space possibly three feet wide, between the plaster and the curtains—a little recess behind them running, so far as I could determine, the full width of the hall. I swept its length with the ray of my light, then held it steady. Not three feet from where I was standing, it had picked out the painted surface of a door.

It was there before me—just a door—a rear entrance to the room—with a spring latch, and a small black knob. It was such a door as one might expect to find in almost any house, cut perhaps for convenience, and kept latched, because seldom used. Indeed, there was nothing unusual about either its appearance or its presence, except that above it was a small blue incandescent lamp.

Blue! The light of my torch showed the color which flooded all the place beyond the curtains, when Gladys Mier sang. And then I knew—knew. I knew why the blue lamp was there—and the reason for its color. Coming out of the flood of yellow light, the men who used it could so perceive it best with their partially exhausted vision—blue and the complementary color to yellow—invisible from the auditorium by reason of its position, but with the

curtains dropped as they passed through them—a beacon to guide their steps aright.

I went toward it. I laid hold of the door and turned it. It gave. I pushed back the catch of the spring lock and drew the door open. It swung to me gently on perfectly operating hinges. A breath of air sighed out and about me, hinting of the night-wrapped spaces behind it. Holding my breath, I directed the ray of my torch through the alley of darkness before me. It fell on the downward sweep of a heavily carpeted stairs.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### BUCKLER AND SHIELD.

**I**T lay there under my eyes—the way to knowledge—to what I sought to learn.

But there was no need to plumb it farther then. Whatever had been done in this house to-night was done, and it would do me no good to seek to know what it was at this time. I closed the door and leaned against it, thankful in my heart that I had found it, and just a little dizzy with the relaxation that is apt to follow either a mental or physical strain.

For a time I stood sagging beside the little door, and then I crept back to my room. To-morrow—to-morrow, I told myself, I would tell all I had discovered to Milly Mann. And the day after that in the evening—Saturday, when the next séance was held, I would probe the mystery that lay through the door under the blue lamp, at the foot of those down-dropping stairs. I sank down on my bed when I had reached it, and drew a long, deep breath.

Two things seemed to me then to dictate my plan. First, of course, was my desire to learn—to pierce through the mask and know the truth of what was being plotted by Popoff and the other men. But there was a second consideration that forbade delay and counseled haste in the discovery I hoped to make. Miss O'Brien had intimated that the number of séances had been increased this week, and despite her suggestion that the thing was done for the purpose of increasing patronage of the in-



stitution, I felt there was a deeper, farther-reaching reason back of the fact.

As I sat there checking up all I had learned and all I had been able to deduce from already established facts, it seemed to me that the real reason back of the increased frequency of the séances themselves was the need of a more frequent meeting—that the group of which Popoff was probably the head were once more busy with their plans—were plotting the next step in their campaign against perhaps another life. And if that were true, then there was no time to lose in learning what they plotted. Consequently it was my duty, regardless of any other consideration, to tell Milly what I already knew, and then seek definite knowledge of what transpired Saturday beyond the door of the blue lamp.

As for Milly, she was as good as her word. She came Friday afternoon, between four and five, just after the bubble dance had been staged for the tea crowd as she explained. And not only did she keep the appointment for her treatment, but she actually met Miss Vincent and demanded boldly to be shown to my room, very much as any one might in such an institution request to be directed to the presence of a friend.

I had been a bit anxious about it all day. She had said she would see me, but I hadn't just seen how, and I hesitated to seem to be watching for her, lest Popoff be stirred to fresh suspicion. In the end, I consoled myself, however, by reasoning that I could leave the matter to Milly herself after the *sang froid* she had already displayed. The event justified my confidence.

She sailed in under Miss Vincent's eyes and greeted me with a somewhat gushing inquiry as to my state of health. She even had a bunch of roses, she said she had brought for me, and she sent Miss Vincent off to get some water and a vase.

As soon as the nurse disappeared her manner changed. "What have you got—quick?" she exclaimed softly, leaning toward me. "I can see you got somethin', Miss Ruth. Come through while that skirt is gone."

I told her swiftly—what I had found

out—and what I had planned; and her eyes widened, her lips parted. "Gee—it's—it's like a story, ain't it?" she gasped. "But—it's just like he said it was—that feller on th' roof. Say—ain't he a wonderful man?"

I nodded. Milly was a peculiar mixture of almost childishness at times and sophistication—a rather baffling mixture, too—because it is so hard with that sort of person to tell just what they sometimes mean. And I asked a question. "What about McDowd?"

"Oh, him," she said. "Well—they're running him down. An' see here, I got a message for you. I reckon you'll know where it comes from when you hear it. I was told to tell you that 'Whoever has faith the size of a mustard seed shall walk aright in the path of endeavor and accomplish the desire of their working,' an' that 'Whoever is chosen an agent of justice is provided thereby with a buckler and shield for the time being, and need know no fear.' I think that's right, though I had the devil's own time tryin' to get it straight in my mind. I hope you know what it means. Mr. Glace said you would."

"I do," I assured her, confident in my own mind that I did—that the message was one sent me by Semi-Dual to nerve me to the final objective of my task—to recall to my mind the events of the Sunday night before, when I had said to him that his words had furnished me not only with a sword but with a shield. And so as I declared my understanding to the girl before me, I thrilled with the deeper meaning of her message—with the assurance that I *was* an agent of justice, and that I *would* accomplish my mission if I had faith and went forward unafraid. And if I have in any way conveyed to your understanding the implacable purpose which sent me into the House of the Hundred Lights in the first place, you may be sure that in that moment I renewed the promise that I would succeed.

Milly sighed. "Well," she declared quickly, with an eye on the door, "I hope you do. But—I guess I'd be scared to death myself. You're really goin' down 'em to-morrow night—them stairs?"

I nodded, smiling at her wide-eyed inspection.

She sighed again. Well—I gotta hand it to you—an' I hope to Gawd nothin' happens."

"As a matter of fact," I said, "if everything goes all right, I hope to be able to leave inside the next two days."

And I really meant it—I really felt that if I gained what I hoped to gain the next night, I would have at least enough to enable the police to act.

The door opened, and Miss Vincent returned with my flowers. Milly tacked her reply to my last statement onto the present fact. "Well—I hope you can, and I'm glad you're feelin' better. Hope you like the flowers. I got to take my treatment and get back to work."

She went out with Miss Vincent and left me alone with my thoughts, in which Semi-Dual's message held no small part. In fact, I hugged it figuratively to my heart all the rest of the evening, and it was still with me when I went to sleep that night. Tomorrow would, unless all my plans miscarried, practically complete my task.

Saturday dawned a beautiful day, but I kept to my room. For a great part of the time I wore my blue glasses and considered each step of my plan. By now I was convinced that the associates of Popoff left their seats during the time the blue light was on and Gladys Mier was singing. They passed behind the yellow curtains and through the door under the blue lamp and went down the stairs to some basement room. And immediately after Popoff called for the green light and left the stage, came always the color symphony evoked by Miss Mier's second song. During that the hall was darkened, of course, and I chose that interval of color-shot darkness for my time. Then I decided I would rise and slip back of the curtain and down the stairs and after that—well, after that I must meet the occasion as it arose, but I would strive to learn anything in any way I could.

As the time of my venture drew nearer and the light of the afternoon became the light of a mellow evening, I do not deny that I found myself shrinking from the span of the next few hours or that in spite

of Semi-Dual's message, I was more or less afraid. For after all, I was a woman—and the men on whom I meant to spy were men whose hands were already reddened with the blood of one murder, as I had every reason to believe. I stood for a long time at my window looking out at the dying sunset. And I thought of Billy—and wished I could see him for a minute—and wondered rather wistfully if he were thinking of me.

Presently, however, I shook myself together, and I do not believe any one could have detected the inward state of my mind when the time of the séance drew near, and I went to it down Popoff's soundless stairs.

And yet I was all aquiver as I sat through the opening demonstrations and waited for the floods of varicolored light. I trembled simply from the strain of waiting—until at last it was ended and the color floods came down from the ceiling, red, orange, yellow, blue, and green.

I had taken a seat from which I could easily escape, and as before I had noted the last row of seats, and the men who came in and took them just before the séance began. As the blue light came on, I once more turned toward them. But I couldn't distinguish plainly. I couldn't tell whether they were filled or empty. My eyes were temporarily blinded to the lower end of the spectrum. I could see blue, green, indigo, violet—but not yellow, red, nor orange. The yellow curtains at the far end of the room were for the time being scarcely more than a misty fog through the flood of an azure haze.

I sat there and shook and waited. The blue light changed to green. And then came darkness! I rose.

In my felt-soled slippers which I had worn I fled down the aisle and reached the curtains. I found my way through them and sought the other door. Its blue lamp had been extinguished, but I knew where it was. Groping, I found the knob of the spring lock and turned it, drew the door toward me and stepped upon the first tread of the stairs.

Here, too, stygian darkness wrapped me. If there had been light to guide the others,



it had been turned out. Step by step, my heart beating like a trip-hammer, I went down one tread and another, groping my way toward the bottom, feeling my way along a wall to my right.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### INTO THE LION'S DEN.

**I**N the end I reached it and stood clinging to the bottom of the wooden rail. I had closed the door at the top behind me. I strained my ears for some guiding indication of sound. There was nothing. Seemingly I stood alone, and for the moment I had the sensation of being lost, was just a little appalled. The rail to which I clung seemed the only secure tie between me and the nameless, unknown well of darkness in which I stood. I began to tremble again and my breath clogged in my throat. Then came the thought that I was losing time. I let go of the rail and moved directly off at right angles from it. My hand struck a roughly plastered wall, and I followed it in the dark by the sense of touch. Abruptly it ended, making me catch my breath as my hand found nothing. And then I caught my breath again, but this time from realization. I had come to a turn in the foundation of the house above me—a corner of the wall I had followed. Before me was another inky recess, and at the end of that—close down against the floor itself, was a thread of yellow light!

A door! A room beyond it, of course! Scarcely daring to breathe now, I crept toward it, guided by the light seeping out beneath it. On tiptoe I reached it—stood outside it. And I heard—a voice!

"Good then—Swift is next on the list."

There came a sort of human rustle—such a sound as men make when they draw together—then the voice of Popoff. "I think so, my comrades—yes. We have struck once—and our striking has, as you know, been crowned by success. The authorities are baffled—dazzled, I might say"—he gave vent to something between an animal growl and a chuckle—"like those silly neurotics up-stairs. Let us then strike another blow

for individual freedom—and let us strike high—at one who stands for all to which we are opposed. Cahill had knowledge against certain of our comrades already under arrest, possessed by no other man. It was fortunate for us that he was of the nature that learns much and keeps it to itself, for Cahill died."

Cahill died. For a moment my senses reeled. Cahill died—my father. The monster on the other side of that door outside which I stood was gloating that he had been slain, because he possessed knowledge against certain members of their lawless band. I gripped my hands and bit my lips in an effort to stay the wave of emotion that swept me—to rally my senses to the performance of their mission and miss nothing of what the plotter of assassinations said as he went on.

"Let Swift then be next—he who signed the sabotage bill—thinking thereby to tie our hands, to intimidate the friends of the people—to shackle the individual rights of man—to prevent the assemblage of those who believe as we do—Swift—whose friends are the rich, the capitalistic class—who believes in modern slavery under the term of labor. Let Swift pay the penalty of his crimes against the equality, the brotherhood, to the spread of which we are sworn. We are agreed on this, and it remains now to plan how and when."

There was a murmur of what seemed assent, and then a new voice asked. "The Cahill affair has about blown over?"

And Popoff answered: "Yes. It is, as I told you. Suspicions were aroused for a few days, but there was no proof. In that lies the superiority of our methods over the knife, the pistol, the bomb. We strike as light strikes, my friends, and leave no trace."

And after that, despite my determination, I lost something of what the fiend in the room was saying, because—Swift was the Governor of the State—I knew him—he had been my father's friend—was a man not to be intimidated or diverted by threats from a step he himself thought right. And Swift was next on the list. But was he? Not, I vowed, if fortune favored me still and I could send a warning out of this

horror-breeding house. Once more I steadied my attention. I must learn—learn. In an effort to hear, I pressed my ear to the door and leaned against it. Popoff seemed just closing: “Our friend who so successfully carried out the other matter, is with us to-night to offer a few suggestions. We will give our attention to him.”

Once more the gathering stirred. There was a sound as of a chair shoved back and I judged that some one rose, particularly as a new voice began speaking almost at once.

“You folks know that I got no love for the sort of guys we’re out to get—th’ sort that makes their money out of th’ people an’ don’t care how they do it—th’ sort that sent a lot of guys to war so they could make money out of makin’ munitions to send other men to hell. I don’t believe in government, I don’t believe in nations—or in war. All I believe in is in a man’s havin’ th’ right to live his life in liberty and peace an’ do as he pleases. An’ I believe that all property ought to be owned in common, an’ nobody allowed to have no more than so much—an’ if he gets more than that by some sort of slick practice, make him split or get his scalp. Get th’ scalp of any guy that stands against th’ rights an’ welfare of man. An’ you all know what Swift has done—in signin’ th’ sabotage bill—an’ in sendin’ over one or two of our people who flung a bomb as a protest against some of our wrongs. Well, then, Swift’s got to get out of the way—an’ here’s what looks to me like a pretty safe plan.

“I reckon there ain’t any of you folks ’ll deny that I know what I’m sayin’ when I tell you a man can be bumped off, across a telephone. You’ll be willin’ to take my word for that. All you gotta do is get th’ guy at the box, an’ then drop a high-tension wire over th’ phone circuit, shortin’ it, an’ throwin’ a jolt of voltage into the ginny you’re aiming to get, an’ that’s enough. Well—if Swift believes in sendin’ a bomb man to th’ lectric chair, for doin’ his bit in th’ cause of th’ people—ain’t he as guilty of murderin’ that man as th’ guy was, I ask you? An’ wouldn’t it be sort of ap-

propriate to let him get his by an overdose of juice?”

“Bravo!” Popoff’s tones boomed out. “An excellent plan.”

“But,” said the man who had spoken once before—one who seemed imbued with caution, I thought—“would not there be danger to the operatives on the switchboard in what you suggest?”

“Danger?” the former speaker repeated. “Of course—but what of it—it wouldn’t be no more than one girl—and justified when the end is considered, I guess. In these days there ain’t nothin’ so cheap as life, my friends, and—what is one girl more or less? Ain’t they dying every day at their work in the capitalistic factories and shops?”

“Right,” said Popoff again. “Perfectly right. Proceed.”

“That’s about all,” the other speaker resumed. “Swift’s got a private phone in th’ bedroom of his house. One block away th’ circuit is crossed by a high-power line. All you got to do is to fix things for a certain hour, turn in a call, plant a man with a lineman’s phone where he can listen in an’ see that the high-tension wire drops at the proper time. Them things can be arranged. Then th’ party callin’ waits till he hears Swift’s voice and tells him to wait a minute for a connection. Th’ other guy takes that for his cue, an’ bing—it’s done. Swift gets his an’ who can tell how it happened?”

“Ah, yes.” I could imagine Popoff compressing his merciless lips. “Who, indeed, my friends?”

I know now that my hands and feet were icy as I crouched there with my ear to the dividing wood. But I did not know it at the time. All that I knew then was that I was succeeding—succeeding—that I was succeeding beyond my wildest dreams—that I was hearing the calm, deliberate plotting of the next mysterious murder for which the band of fiends in the room beyond me schemed, and that I was in a position to swear that Michael Popoff was the head of their organization, the director of their plans.

“Good,” he said now. “If this meets with your approval, my comrades, it will be arranged.”



Again there was a murmur of assent and then some one spoke: "Any of us can turn in the call, but who's going to drop that wire on Swift's line? It's your plan, friend."

"Mine?" said the former speaker, and went on while it seemed to me that the heart stopped beating in my breast. "Nix—I don't hanker to hog all th' jobs. You folks know I slipped th' first deal across without any hitches—but that ain't a sign I'm goin' to put my head in hock for everything that's gotta be done. I fixed up that balloon for old Cahill, an' guv it to th' girl that slipped it to him—but I ain't th' goat of this crowd by a long shot. You gotta get some other man."

The murderer! For a moment I felt sick with the horror of it—numbed, deadened with the sheer appalling realization of the truth. The murderer of my father—he who had plotted and carried out the terrible sneaking, cowardly plan that had ended his life, was standing there—boasting of it, on the other side of the door. I think that just at first had it not been for the support of the panels against which I clung, I would have fallen, and then—I forgot all else—everything else seemed blotted out save that one fact. I offer that as an explanation for what followed, my further actions. My father's murderer was there in that lighted room—and I lost all sense of other proportion, seemed suddenly able to think of but one thing.

I must see him—I *must*! There was no half-way ground. I must catch a glimpse of his face, be able to identify him past all question as the man—the unknown waiter who had placed the balloon in Milly's hand and sent it by her to compass my father's death. And—I might be able to see him if I took a somewhat desperate chance. There was a knob to the door, of course. My fingers crept out to it. I would turn it ever so slowly, and gently, very gently, I would let the door swing partly open—oh, not far—just far enough to leave a little crack—to gain a narrow aperture through which I could add the sense of sight to hearing.

I know now it was madness, that I must partially at least have lost control of myself. But then, as I say, I was lost to reason

under the spell of the revelation I had heard, of the knowledge that he who had slain my father was there, just beyond me. My groping fingers found the knob. I held my breath. Gently, gently, I turned the object I had gripped, releasing the latch of the barrier against which I leaned, to my undoing.

Because, the very weight of my body caused the latch to yield not gradually, as I had intended, but suddenly—with a jerk. The door swung open sharply, jerking the knob from my fingers, and, gasping from instinct wholly, thrown entirely off my balance, I half fell, half staggered, into the room.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### DEAD OR ALIVE.

AS well I might have stumbled into a den of savage beasts—a pit of snakes. I knew it. My desire to see the man who admitted killing my father had wrecked my plans. I knew that. I stood there facing the group of men about the bare rectangular top of a table, for a fleeting second, until the surprise of my unexpected advent passed and they sprang as one man to their feet.

But even so—knowing I had spoiled everything now at the very climax and probably brought my own doom on myself as well, that impulse which had led me to my present position, in a measure prevailed. And my first glance picked out the slender figure of a man, standing midway of one side of the table—of a man with red hair—of the electrician of the House of the Hundred Lights—of Barney McDowd himself.

So much I saw and then the instinct of escape came strong upon me. These men, I realized, were as greatly surprised as I was myself. If—if I could get back through that door—into the darkness—I might still snatch victory and the precious knowledge of McDowd's identity from defeat by precipitate flight. I spun about to put the thought into execution. Too late. They were on me like a pack of dogs.

I felt myself seized, torn at by clutching

fingers. My arms were nearly torn out of their sockets. I was buffeted this way, and that, lifted up and half carried, half dragged, toward the table—thrust into a chair with small regard to my feelings, and held there by a self-constituted guard on either side. Then and then only I became aware that of all those present—and there were an even dozen—Popoff alone had failed to leave his place.

He sat there at the head of the table seemingly unmoved, looking directly at me out of his lusterless eyes that more than ever now seemed like the hooded eyes of a snake.

Back of them I knew his evil mind was at work. And I had to admit that given a definite clue, his deductions were quick.

"So, then, Mees Howard," he said at length, waving his jabbering companions to silence; "it appears that for all your cleverness, you have made a mistake."

"Hold on there, doc!" McDowd interrupted in excited fashion. "Her name ain't Howard—it's Cahill. She's old Cahill's girl. An' she's a dirty spy."

Popoff turned his snake eyes on him. "That's enough, you fool," he snarled, and addressed me again. "Permit me to compliment you upon that cleverness until tonight. It should tell you that there are but two ways in which you can leave this house."

He paused as though expecting me to answer, but I said nothing and abruptly another of those present spoke. "I guess there was more than merely a checkin' up on that other girl back of the visit that city 'tec' made here last Saturday mornin'."

"Ah, yes, it would appear so." Popoff compressed his lips. "It would appear also that there is much more in the return of the other girl here for treatment and her '*friendship*'"—he emphasized the word—"for Miss Cahill than at first appeared. All those things must be taken into consideration in gaging our future course. It appears that I have been in error, yet I trust that you will be guided by my advice in considering the disposal to be made of this young woman."

Once more he paused, and nobody said a word. I heard them breathing hoarsely

around me as men will in a crisis at times. And then Popoff's thin lips stretched into a sneering smile as though he sensed the quality of their emotion and was amused in grim fashion by it.

"I said a moment ago that she could leave here in two ways. Those ways are dead—or alive. It is for you to decide how."

"Dead or alive—how do you mean?" a voice exclaimed.

Popoff nodded. "Dead is dead, comrade. Alive—if you wish I will explain."

Dead or alive! It was rather strange to sit there and hear them discuss it—to realize they were talking about myself. And yet I was strangely calm at the time. I can hardly explain it, but it was as though some of Popoff's own emotionless attitude had waked a reflex in my mind and made me sit passively through the discussion. Or perhaps it was just such a condition as I have heard men describe after some peril was passed, throughout which they seemed utterly cool, almost incapable of any feeling, nervousness or fear; a full realization of their own position coming only at a later time. Be that as it may, I know that I actually gave close attention to everything that was said, noticed it, weighed it as though it dealt with some other person and that after a time I began repeating the name of Semi-Dual over and over in what seemed some remote recess of my brain. For now more and more I became aware that the danger he had mentioned was upon me, as Popoff went on:

"Dead—there would be difficulty in explaining her disappearance—since it is practically certain now that her presence in the house is known, that it was inspired by a carefully thought out plan entailing her use of a name other than her own, and her residence here as a patient. Alive—is another thing."

"If you can close her mouth." Some one I could not see suggested behind me.

Popoff's eyes lifted briefly and dropped back again to where he was tracing lines and circles on the table with a finger.

"The object of this discussion, comrade," said he, "is to consider that very thing. Her mouth must be closed, of course, in so



far as the retailing of anything she may have learned is concerned—and I have a plan. Even as you will not deny our friend's knowledge of electricity, so will you also not deny my knowledge of the uses and effects of light, and I trust you will give me your confidence when I tell you that by means of a certain very simple arrangement, it is possible to accomplish that aim. This poor young woman," again his merciless smile writhed across his sneering lips, "came here, as we know, for treatment—and if, because of her extremely nervous condition, her mind should break down in spite of our endeavors, we would have but one recourse. That would be commitment to a hospital for the insane."

Again he came to a pause, once more lifting his lusterless eyes to mark the effect of his words.

The breathing of the men deepened about me, grew harsher, almost hoarse.

"But even the insane may rave," some one said at length.

For the third time, Popoff smiled. "We shall give her, then, something else to rave about, than what you have in mind," he said, and waved a hand as though brushing the partial objection aside. "The steps necessary to accomplish the intended result will be sufficient to occupy the remnants of her mind. But her babblings will be no more than of things which, on the basis of our routine treatment, can be easily explained, I assure you. Come, let us put it to a vote. There are two solutions—dead or alive."

And now fear came upon me. I began to tremble. I heard my own teeth click together. Death it seemed to me I might have faced, but this other thing—this un-hinging of my mind—this condemning me to an imbecile state—to a simpering idiocy in which I would rave, perhaps, with what little intelligence should remain to me, of the last thing that had come upon me in the House of the Hundred Lights, completely shattered my nerves and reduced me to a wholly despairing state of horror which even yet I am unable to express. That horror increased as I heard the tally of the vote, and once more met Popoff's lusterless stare as he announced it.

"Well, then, Mees Cahill, it appears that you are to remain alive."

"No—no—kill me—for God's sake kill me—end it—have it done with, but don't tamper with my mind!" All at once I became aware that I was speaking in little less than a scream.

Popoff compressed his lips and shook his head. "I can appreciate your feelings, Mees Cahill," he said. "But—it is not for you to decide." And then he looked at his watch and addressed McDowd. "You get on about your business—I'll not need you. The rest of you resume your places. Wait in my office until the others have left and then return. In so far we shall change routine under the conditions. I shall forego my usual address"—and to McDowd again—"tell the pianist that I am detained with a patient, as you go out."

They left us—Popoff and me—alone in that room. We sat there and stared at one another—I and that human fiend with the eyes of a watching snake. It came into my swirling thoughts that he himself was one of unsound mind, a madman. Only so could his merciless determination, his soulless implacability be explained. And yet, after a time I spoke to him. "You—you perverted McDowd's brain."

He nodded, without otherwise shifting his position. "Yes—he was needed for my purpose—and—as I told you—he was trained for the work that needed to be done. Really, Mees Cahill, it is marvelous what can be done with the means that I command. And it is all so simple. Life is vibration, and vibration consists of certain oscillating wave lengths, and waves are rhythm and rhythm is harmony, be it of music or other sound, or of light or of blended colors, or the sighing of the wind, or the rise and fall of the ocean—or the dancing of a moonbeam or a maiden. All is rhythm, motion, vibration—one and the same thing." Suddenly as he paused, the film seemed to vanish momentarily from his eyes and they blazed. The fires of hell itself seemed to leap from them for an instant, and I knew that I sat facing a madman indeed—and one to whom it was hopeless to appeal. Once more my soul sent forth its cry to Semi-Dual and I sat on

praying he would sense that silent message, while the film crept back across Popoff's eyes.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### MURDERING THE MIND.

**F**OOTSTEPS came at last. The door was thrown open and the men returned, with the exception of McDowd. Popoff rose.

"Bring her up to the treatment rooms," he directed, and walked out without another word.

But the ten men closed about me like a guard, precluding escape as we quitted the room.

A light had been turned on in the basement. It shone dimly on the rough walls of the foundation between which we passed. I was like a prisoner leaving a cell in some dungeon to meet his doom. We reached a different stair from the one I had crept down an hour before, and began to climb. And the stair was a veritable *Via Dolorosa*—a way to doom—not of the body but of the reason, the intelligence, of all that made life worth living. Almost the thought overcame me and I staggered, to find myself caught and upheld and dragged on and up that way of dreadful sorrow—that way of horror, by grasping, unkind hands.

Yet their very grip, their bruising clutch on the flesh of my arms and shoulders, steadied me after a time. Again I began calling, calling. My cry for aid became in itself a rhythm, with each mounting tread of the stairs. "Semi-Dual—Semi-Dual," I hurled the thought from me with each uncertain step I took. I centered in it all the vital energy left in me, as it seemed. "Semi-Dual! Oh, God, let him hear me in time!" For I do not deny that my control was utterly shattered and that I was more or less in a state of collapse at the end of that journey in a little black-walled room.

Popoff signed us into it as we reached the top of the third stairs. Already he had dragged out the regular treatment couch and substituted a chair—a chair with a rest into which after I had been thrust by many hands, he himself clamped my head.

Vaguely I wondered if it was this chair in which Barney McDowd had been "trained" for his part in the madman's schemes. And then I cried out in physical pain as he took up a pair of tiny metal instruments and bent above me to force them under my lids in such fashion that I could not close my eyes. Because of the position in which my head was clamped, my gaze was directed considerably above the horizontal plane.

In a final, almost instinctive, effort at resistance, I sought to tear the things out after he had placed them. But he had foreseen that and his next step in preparation was to strap my feet and hands, before he mounted on a chair and screwed the cord of an incandescent lamp into the flanging box used in giving the light baths such as I had already taken.

"The method I am about to employ depends upon eye strain entirely," he addressed the men about us as he took up a bit of string and tied it about the cord of the swinging lamp. "You will notice that this lamp is placed a trifle above and some fourteen inches in front of the patient's eyes. A regulated pull on this bit of cord I am now attaching will give it a rhythmic swing. The result of a fixed staring at the lamp against the black background, is a visual irritation. In the end, vision is reversed."

He gave the string a tiny pull.

The lamp began to swing.

I watched it. I tried not to, but I could not escape the brilliant oscillation of its pendulumlike sweep in response to the urge of the string in Popoff's hands. Back and forth, back and forth, it flashed before my dilating pupils. Popoff had fallen silent. As in the room below, I heard naught save the rasping breathing of the men about me. This, then, I told myself, was the end.

Back and forth, back and forth. I knew my eyeballs were turning in time to the sway of the light, turning against my will, this way and that, to mark its swinging—had taken up the rhythm it set for them. And I knew that they were growing very, very tired—were beginning to ache, to smart and burn from their enforced star-



ing, the loss of the natural screening of their widely retracted lids.

Back and forth, back and forth.

The strain was becoming unbearable, I felt. It was more than a smarting and aching. It was becoming a stabbing pain. I'm not sure, but as I recall it now, I moaned. Anyway, some sound aroused me a bit and I began trying to force my mind away from a contemplation of that swinging light—to think of other things—to call up a vision of Semi-Dual and his quarters on the roof where I had met him—to send him another voiceless cry for assistance.

And yet—the yellow glare before me, against the black background of the walls, held me with a dreadful fascination—and suddenly I became aware that the outline of the lamp was no longer plain—that it was growing misty, swelling, taking on untrue proportions, coming to be no longer a lamp but a vast glow that throbbed and pulsed in front of my agonized eyeballs, that it was spreading, spreading, blotting out all save itself, was coming to fill the room, as with a strange artificial sunlight.

This was the first effect Popoff had named. Despite all my efforts, it had come upon me. But I struggled—struggled frantically still to prevent it going further. I called all my will into operation to defy its further encroachments on the citadel of the mind, to beat back its subtle radiance that seemed creeping, creeping, creeping, past my prisoned lids, farther and farther into my brain, until I pictured myself as a sort of undreamable mental Cassabianca standing on the last untouched stage of reason, watching the steady advance of a fatal fire.

And then it went out. I saw nothing. Absolute blackness came down. For a moment I thought I had won and I was glad. I thought sight had failed and shut out that dreadful light—that Popoff had overreached himself and made me blind—and I was glad, glad even of that—glad with a thankfulness that made me want to weep. Because, if I was blind, then reason was safe, and an impassable barrier had been dropped against the encroachments of the yellow light.

How long it was before that elation was hurled to earth, I do not know. All I

know is that I nursed it as something very precious for what seemed a heaven of security, regardless of time, ere I became aware that I was mistaken after all—that I was seeing again.

Only I didn't know what I was seeing. That upon which I looked was something the like of which I had never witnessed. It was like looking into a grayish mass of unknown substance that pulsed and throbbed and stirred with a steady peculiar writhing as steady as the pulse of the light I could no longer see—as steady as the beating of my heart.

My heart—the thought was arresting. I bent my mind upon it. I looked or seemed to look deeper into the quivering gray mass—to perceive that it was shot through, laced by a branching network of tiny red lines—that broadened and narrowed in a rhythmic fashion as the gray mass stirred and pulsed. I began trying to synchronize their steady dilation and contraction with the beating of the heart I could feel beneath my breast. They answered exactly in their movement, and gave me the dreadful answer. Those branching red lines were the trunks of blood-filled vessels; that writhing gray mass—even as I realized that Popoff had been right in saying vision would be reversed at the end—the force of the thought seemed to make it shake and quiver—that gray, red shot mass was the seat of reason itself—I was looking into my own brain!

I knew it—sensed it. But oh the horror, the unspeakable, the inexpressible horror of it. It seethed and trembled and throbbed. And more horrible still was the certain knowledge that after all, the yellow light had accomplished its purpose, had crept in through the powerless lids and reached the Temple of the Mind—that the temporary blindness was the time wherein the action of the optic nerve had been reversed—that unless I could close my lids—reason would be dethroned—and that like Popoff and Barney McDowd, I would be mad.

I began to struggle in an effort to loosen my feet and hands, to free them and tear the tiny clips that held my lids open, from my eyes, to shut out that swinging light I could no longer see but which I knew now

was swinging, swinging ticking out like a clock of fate the duration of sanity itself. I called every fiber of my body into being for that last resistance. The gray mass into which I was looking perforce twisted, quivered, shook with the effort of volition. It was like a dynamo, an engine raced to its last capacity, as it produced the impulse to set muscle and tendon and bone into motion in that final effort to loosen my bonds. And it failed—I watched it—beheld it exert its fullest power, strain and seethe with its effort and relax and sink down like an animal exhausted and aquiver with the knowledge of defeat.

"It is the final stage."

I heard the words faintly in Popoff's voice. And though I have never believed in a personal devil—I am sure that if there be an entity, a conscious force of evil, it might speak as he spoke then.

It was the final stage—the end—and after that nothing—the unknowing life of one bereft of reason, until the vital forces of the body should wear out—a stage of vegetation. The tottering thing within me, which Popoff was destroying, waked to a final almost unthinking effort. A fiend assailed me—

"Semi-Dual—God!" I screamed.

The gray mass throbbed—trembled—  
Blackness—

## CHAPTER XXIX.

MISS CAHILL CALLS.

**I** MUST take up again the story where Miss Cahill lays it down, and carry it on not only through those days she spent in the House of the Hundred Lights, but through the events of that amazing night on which she so dramatically brings her narrative to an end—that night on which Semi-Dual struck his arresting blow against at least one manifestation of those forces of evil he had declared to be unchained.

He called me to him the day Ruth entered the house, and I responded at once. I confess I had been feeling a bit "out" of things with Bryce, chasing around on the trail of "reds" with Johnson and

Byrne, and even Milly Mann on the job. Soon after I entered Semi's room I understood that I was the link between him and the others.

For instance, as Miss Cahill has already mentioned, I called on Milly Mann the evening of those days when she visited Popoff's house. And I had a daily report on everything they learned, including the record of McDowd.

He was an eccentric beyond doubt, had always had socialistic tendencies and was known as a conscientious objector during the war. There had been some trouble with him in the camp to which he was taken in the draft, and because he had refused to do a man's part as most people saw it, he had been forced to perform other work. Byrne got that through army sources and Johnson dug up the record of the man's activities since he had been in town. For a time he had worked as an electrician and an operator of machines in a movie house. Later he was known to have made inflammable speeches and counseled violence as a measure for enforcing the demands of the strikers, during a local walkout a few months past. For the last two months, however, he had apparently kept out of the limelight so far as the police were concerned. Presumably, that would have coincided with the time when he fell into Popoff's clutches.

As for Gladys Mier—there was nothing to be learned about her that seemed worth while.

These things were reported to me and I took them to Dual. Through me he issued what few directions he had to give during those dragging days. But they were few indeed. His attitude, as I look back on it now, and as I felt even then, was that of one assured of his knowledge and waiting for a definite time, while the rest of us were more or less on edge. And one of his directions nearly sent Johnson into a state of insubordination, because it was so opposed to what he had in mind. Naturally, he was inclined to shadow McDowd after Milly gave us Miss Cahill's report. Semi told him to keep off—to avoid any action that could by any possible interpretation intimate to Popoff that his place was being



considered by the police. And it was only after everything was over that we learned how his own companion, Henri, had spent two nights covering that particular matter, and how the thing was done.

Then on Saturday morning, after I had given him Milly's latest report of Miss Cahill's discovery he calmly told me to direct Johnson to be ready with a raiding party for instant descent on the Grant Street house, and to bring him to the roof with Bryce and Byrne that night when I returned myself.

"Come in a closed machine," he directed, "and leave it at the curb."

But it was not until I had carried out his orders and we were all seated with him that he explained.

"At the beginning," he said then, "I told you that the forces of evil were in operation. And I have waited in order that I might strike as heavy a blow as possible against them, even though that blow be no more than the scotching of a snake. To-night, however, that blow must be delivered, unless a tragedy far beyond my intent should mar our plans and occasion lasting regret."

"Tragedy?" Byrne repeated sharply. "Mr. Dual?" Every one present knew he was thinking of Ruth on the instant, and Semi answered:

"Miss Cahill shall come to no permanent harm, Mr. Byrne, I assure you. I have in no way failed to consider her safety in my plans. Yet as I told her in your presence, danger threatens her endeavor. Save for the impossibility of gaining the knowledge necessary to our success against the plotters of evil, in any other way of which I could think, I would not have consented to her undertaking. To-night that danger comes upon her—"

"To-night!" Byrne was white to the lips. "My God!"

"To-night, Mr. Byrne," Dual inclined his head. "It is shown very plainly here in the charts of my calculations—but a danger that may be thwarted if we strike our blow in time."

"Then—" Byrne caught a great breath and half started to his feet, "why are we sitting here instead of acting?"

"Sit down again, Mr. Byrne," said Semi Dual. "The time is not yet. Let me explain in so far as I can. To begin with, Michael Popoff is a man of unsound mind. It is shown clearly in my figures of this matter, and is the only explanation of his actions. Those powers of evil which we have been called upon to combat do not hesitate to employ such agents. Popoff has used his wealth in a warfare against riches, as he alleges, and erected an elaborate camouflage of his purpose, calculated to trick the understanding and baffle the mind. As I have told you before, good is harmony with universal vibration and evil is disharmony with the universal rhythm, and each is a state of mind. The doers of wrong may be said to be insane—to be rebels out of sympathy with the eternal progress of the race, beings who, like Ajax, defy the lightnings. They are Legionaries of Sathanus—and like him they shall be cast down."

"But Ruth?" Byrne persisted, his forehead beginning to glisten with tiny drops of fear-wrung perspiration.

Semi Dual smiled on him, with his lips and his deep gray eyes. "Shall suffer, Mr. Byrne, as the price of the truth, the fulfillment of her mission. It was unavoidable for the success of our purpose."

"D'ye mean," said Bryce a trifle hoarsely, "that you knew she was going to be in danger to-night, from th' first—all this time?"

"All along, Mr. Bryce." Semi smiled upon him also. "But you yourself heard me instruct Miss Cahill that she might telepathically call me to her when that danger came upon her."

"All right." Jim drew a kerchief and mopped his face. "I guess you know what you're doin' but if things have gone so far that she's in any sort of real danger, what's the use of waiting any longer?"

Dual replied at once: "Because, Mr. Bryce, the time of danger and the time of justice overlap. Each time is shown in my calculations. Yet the measure of peril is less than the measure of the wrongdoer, which is meted to him as the course of a race to be run—and the end of that race is recorded in my calculations as of an ap-

pointed time, with the measure of peril uncompleted."

Jim turned his eyes from Byrne to me and Johnson. "All right," he said again. "But that's certainly cutting it fine."

"With the danger of cutting it too fine," Byrne burst forth, rising in the grip of his emotion and beginning to pace the floor. "My God, Dual, if I'd known what you've just told us, I'd never have let her go there. How long are you going to sit here doing nothing?"

"Until Miss Cahill calls me," Dual returned.

"Calls you?" Byrne paused in his pacing and stared. "You mean until you think she's trying to send you a telepathic message. You mean you're risking her safely on that—on the impression that she's asking you for assistance! You're risking her safety—possibly her life on that sort of a flimsy supposition! And you expect me to let you do it—to stay passive!"

He was just a little beside himself, was Byrne. Dual, knew it, of course. As the young chemist poured out his protest, he turned his gray eyes on him and held them until he met their gaze and his hurried utterance clogged and faltered. There was always a strangely compelling power in Semi's eyes.

Then, as Byrne broke off and stood before him panting, he said slowly: "I expect you to resume your seat and wait, even as I am waiting, Mr. Byrne." His glance turned to the great clock in the corner of the room. "The hour of that need approaches closely."

"My God." Byrne sat down and clenched his hands. He was breathing quickly, yet deeply like one who has run a race and drinks the air into his lungs in unsteady gasps.

"And now," Dual prompted, "let us have no more of discussion. We sit in the calm before action. Let us wait in silence the summons to it." He leaned back in his great chair and closed his eyes.

Jim found a cigar and bit off the end with an almost savage motion, set it alight and sat champing it between his strong-jawed teeth. Johnson looked strained some way as I glimpsed his teeth. Byrne was

gripping the arms of his chair and fighting against his emotions. Dual alone among us reclined seemingly unmoved in his chair, scarce seeming to breathe.

So we waited for that call—that nameless, intangible cry from a woman for succor. I felt my own heart throbbing—throbbing in slow heavy waves, as we waited. It was unbelievable—eerie, uncanny, weird. I couldn't blame Byrne for his outburst. He loved the woman, and it was asking much of a man to risk her safety on what appeared to be so slender a thread.

The great clock ticked in the corner. Its hands crept around its face. Somewhere a whistle shrieked faintly from a speeding train, with a sobbing sound. Bryce's cigar made a thin blue cloud in the room. And that was all. There was nothing more. Or was there?

Dual stirred. He sat up. He reached to the corner of his desk and opened a door and took out a telephone standard. "Inspector, call the station and tell your men to meet you on the corner this side of the house on Grant Street," he directed. "Do it quickly. The hour has arrived! Miss Cahill is calling."

The hour had arrived. A moment before, we were sitting there—and I know Byrne and Johnson were doubting. But—at Semi's words, they were men electrified.

Johnson reached the telephone in a single bound. Byrne was on his feet, balanced like a runner waiting for the starter's pistol. I dug my hand into a pocket and found the automatic I generally carried, as I left my chair. Bryce came up standing. Johnson's voice was barking orders and he jammed the receiver back onto the hook with a bang and turned, as Dual rose.

And then we streamed out of the tower, and across the garden and down the stairs. Johnson set a finger to the button of the elevator signal and held it there until he saw the light of the upcoming cage. Its door clanged back and we huddled inside as it dropped us twenty stories without stop in response to the inspector's order. Another moment and we reached the machine which I had directed to await our coming, and Johnson was demanding haste



of the driver in reaching the House of the Hundred Lights, as we climbed aboard.

I shall not describe that drive. It was no more than a mad rush through the night, in which we all sat silent, straining mentally toward our destination even beyond the whirling dash of the wheels, until at length they slowed on a corner where the squad wagon waited with Johnson's men, and we climbed out and stood in the road.

Then there was a brisk walk down the street toward the house, a posting of men already coached in their parts, and a bold advance up the steps—a testing of the door.

It was open and the inspector threw it back. We pressed through it into the lower hall. A woman—a nurse apparently—appeared suddenly as though attracted by our advent. For a moment she stood staring and then turned running toward the upward sweep of the stairs. Johnson was upon her in an instant, dragging her back, literally hurling her into the arms of one of his men. "Come on. She's showed us the way we want to travel," he growled.

Hard on his heels, we stormed up to the second floor and paused. To either hand stretched a hallway lined by doors, and save for our own tense breathing, there was no sound. And then—faint—far away, muffled, but unmistakably in its timbre, there came a woman's scream.

"Come on," Johnson bawled again and hurled himself at a second flight of stairs in his anxiety.

As before, we followed, swarming up the heavily carpeted treads, reached the third floor and another hallway, with another succession of doors. And as the thud of our racing feet died and we stood again briefly glancing along it, one of them sprang suddenly open and a man appeared.

"Hands up!"

As Johnson spoke, his service weapon flashed out of its pocket holster.

A faint, unsteady light, as from a swinging lamp, appeared at the back of the man he covered. And as Johnson's voice roared out, a sound of voices struck upon our ears. In a struggling pack, other men boiled out of the door behind the other, took one startled glance at our advancing mass that

barred their escape and elevated their hands.

It was as easy as that. They surrendered. We gathered them in—all that is save one—all save a man with dark hair shot through with graying strands in little flecks of white, who dashed without warning out of the door, and flung himself upon us, in a mad effort to break through—a man endowed, as it seemed, with a maniac's strength, who fought silently and with a desperate determination, bowling over Byrne and Bryce with two well-directed blows of his flailing fists—a man on whose lips there had gathered a little line of froth, as I gazed into his rage-distorted face and found myself seized in a grip of a resistless hand and hurled back against a wall with a force that drove the breath out of my body—as he won free and darted back along the hall toward a window beyond the stairs, reached it and began a frantic effort to lift the sash.

"Halt!"

Once more Johnson bellowed as Jim and Byrne scrambled to their feet.

*Crash!* The man at the window put down his head and hurled himself bodily through the sash with a clatter of smashing glass.

And then strangely he hung there—relaxed, sank down. I ran toward him. His hands were clawing at his throat, as I reached him. They found and drew forth a sliver of the heavy pane that had pierced it. Blood followed it in a gush—a horrible flood. His eyes rolled. He half staggered up and sank back, gasping—choking. Again he clawed at his throat, strangled, went altogether limp.

I turned from his dissolution. The men we had taken, stood huddled under the weapons of Johnson's men.

"Ruth, Ruth!" Byrne's voice was sounding from the room out of which they had come.

Dual and Bryce and he had vanished. I ran toward the sound of Byrne's calling.

He was working frantically to free the hands and feet of Ruth Cahill, who sat inside a black-wall apartment in front of a swinging incandescent lamp.

"She don't answer—we're too late,"

Byrne mouthed in an anguished tone as he worked. "Ruth—Ruth dear—Ruth! This is what comes of waiting for telepathic messages. Oh, God!"

"Patience," said Semi Dual, as he reached up and turned off the light. "Bring the woman we saw down stairs."

## CHAPTER XXX.

### MEASURE FOR MEASURE.

**W**HAT followed, proved beyond all discussion, that as Bryce put it, "Dual was a man who could cut it not too fine, but just fine enough."

We freed Ruth from her bonds and Byrne lifted her out of the chair. He wouldn't let anyone else touch her, and she made a slight limp burden in his arms, her face as white as death, rolling back on her slender throat against his shoulder.

Bryce hurried off down stairs to find the woman and bring her back, and Johnson saw to the removal of the captured men. We didn't disturb the body of Popoff, huddled under the broken window at the time.

And once the nurse, reduced now to a pallid state of unresistance, appeared, Semi demanded to be shown a blue-lighted treatment room.

There, by his directions, Byrne laid the body of the girl he carried on the couch and the nurse herself turned on the light. Its steady radiance bathed her white face in the frame of her dark-brown hair upon the pillow. I heard Byrne groan as once more Semi himself, with a touch as gentle as a woman's, inserted the tiny clips that had held back her lids in that other chamber of horror.

"Patience," he said again. "You have not called on the name of the one God in vain, Mr. Byrne. For even as that body lying now beneath a broken window is an earnest that what is written is written, so, too, is it an earnest that what is written shall come to pass. Do not forget that I told you this maid should suffer as the price of knowledge, or that I told you the time of her suffering overlapped that of justice—or that I am employing now that light which is the compliment of the one

by which Popoff, the madman, sought to destroy her. Wait the effect of the light. Her reason will return."

And then, as Byrne said nothing but stood watching the face of the woman he loved, out of hot, dry eyes, Dual addressed her sleeping intelligence:

"Ruth—Ruth, thou woman who hast called on my name—and the name of the One in the hour of thy need; thy call has been heard, and I am present to aid thee in all things needed. Yet now is the peril that came upon thee past, and I say unto thee—awake."

There came a flicker of the eyelids against the clips. The lips of the sleeper parted slightly. She moaned.

"The peril is past. Thy mission is accomplished," the voice of Dual came again a monotone in the room. "Awake and know thyself—Ruth."

Her breathing quickened—as by a mighty effort, she lifted a hand toward her prisoned lids.

"Thy bonds are removed. Awaken!"

Higher and higher her hands crept toward her face. Dual reached over and slipped the clips from her eyes.

"Awaken—Ruth."

"Yes—yes." A whisper from the lips of the girl before us.

"Awake."

And suddenly Ruth Cahill screamed—screamed and struggled and sat up on the couch as Semi's own hands supported her shoulders—and he bent his face before her.

"Thou hast called me, Ruth," his voice came, shot by a quiver of emotion.

"Semi Dual! Billy!" Swiftly she stretched out her arms toward Byrne, white-faced beside her. "You came—you came. Thank God!" She broke into a very hysteria of weeping as Billy caught her hands.

"It is ended," said Semi Dual. He rose from his place on the edge of the couch and led Jim and me from the room. "He who lives by the sword, by the sword shall perish. I have said that before, my friends, and once more, even though it be in the guise of a bit of glass, you have seen justice's sword strike down."

"On Popoff, yes," said Johnson, who



just then came puffing back up stairs with a mass of papers in his hands. "And it was about time he got it—and you was right about his plans. I been searchin' his office an' I found enough to sting this whole bunch, I guess, with the exception of the O'Brien girl, who seems to be all right. Got a list of names here with Cahill's scratched off, and Swift's was th' next. How's Miss Cahill?"

"Aside from the unavoidable effects of her experience," Semi told him, "Miss Cahill is herself."

The door of the blue room opened and Byrne appeared. "She wants to see you—all of you," he faltered. His eyes were reddened and I suspected he had been weeping. But I thought nothing of that as we filed into the room. If ever a man had a reason for such an exhibition of emotion, Byrne had every cause that night for thankful tears.

Ruth was sitting on the couch as we passed inside. Toward Dual she held out a hand. "Billy has told me—what has happened. But—there is something else I must tell you. The man McDowd left before I was brought up here. And—he—he killed my father. I heard him say so—boast of it—glory in it. And—and—he must not escape."

"He shall not escape," Semi said, taking her outstretched fingers. "Even now he is under arrest. He was arrested at the Kenton Grill after he left this house to-night."

"At th' Kenton?" exclaimed Johnson in amazement.

"At the Kenton, Mr. Johnson," said Semi Dual. "He was operating the spotlight for the cabaret performance, and has been for some time. For two days my companion Henri has had him under observation. He obtained a position at the Kenton as a waiter, on my advice and aided by the existing strike of waiters and a hint that he was on the trail of the murderer of Judge Cahill, which I suggested he should give to manager Sloan. Knowing exactly what to look for, he had small difficulty in locating his man. I adopted that means of insuring his arrest after Henri had watched

this house two days ago and ascertained where he went."

"Johnson," a man's voice called from the hallway.

"Here." The inspector looked out of the door.

"There's a Frenchy down here askin' for some one he says he was to meet about this time."

"Henri. I instructed him to come with his report. Kindly have him up, inspector," Dual explained.

And after that we waited until Henri himself came in through the door and bowed and reported in simple fashion:

"Master—the man was arrested by Mr. Sloan's orders, after I had pointed him out. He has confessed. After he was taken, he explained how he slipped on the jacket of a waiter between the first dance and the encore and took the balloon down stairs and gave it to Miss Mann. The jacket he brought with him in the bag of tools he employs for repairs on the machine."

Ruth Cahill caught a deep, unsteady breath.

"He has confessed," she said. "Mr. Dual—how can I thank you for what you have enabled me to gain? Not only the apprehension of this man—but—" her dark eyes turned to Byrne—"so many other things."

"Nay—thank me not, since no man deserves thanks for doing his duty, more than one soldier thanks another for a victory gained," Dual returned. "For as the forces of an army are one, and each soldier but an integral part, so are the forces of life one also, and each man and woman is but an atom in the body of the race. Happy then he who does his duty, since duty is the keynote in the symphony of existence—and he or she who does it truly, finds thanks enough in a resulting harmony with the eternal plan."

For a long moment after he had spoken, she sat regarding him in silence, and then she said: "I think I understand."

Abruptly she turned to Byrne with an almost eager expression. "Billy—I'm tired of being Judith, and I want to be just—Ruth again—always. Take me home."

(The end.)

# The Watcher at the Ford



by L. Patrick  
Greene

THE highway leading from the kraal of Marfwe, a headman of the Barotse tribe, to the land of the white men—is a narrow path leaving its snakelike way through the thick jungle growth. It is rarely used and in places it is hard to distinguish from the numerous game trails which cross it. But at two seasons of the year it is a well trodden path.

Twice a year, when the newly recruited laborers are on their way to work in the mines, and again when they return gaily dressed in multi-colored raiment, bedecked with trinkets and reeking with cheap perfume, the jungle creatures are affrighted by the boisterous shouts and songs of the natives and for many days thereafter shun the trail about which still hangs the strange, detested man scent. Just before the Zambezi River is reached the jungle growth becomes even thicker and thornier, flesh-tearing brambles hang low across the path. Apes gambol in the branches high overhead and shriek maledictions on the lesser folk who walk on earth.

Trekking here is slow—slow for a man in the fulness of his strength—slow to the returning laborer, his heart on fire with eagerness to return to his people and show off the knowledge acquired while in the service of the white man.

Even Marfwe found the way all but impassable, and Marfwe, though he was no longer a young man, had the strength of a lion in his mighty shoulders. So, with an

indomitable courage and determination, as though driven by some power within, he struggled onward, hacking furiously at the creepers which sought to bar his way.

Behind him, eyes heavy for lack of sleep, bodies bent with weariness, walked six women—his wives. They were heavily laden, and as they walked they chanted a dismal dirge. Occasionally the cadence was broken by one, bolder than the rest, who raised her voice in protest.

"We can go no further, O Marfwe. Let us rest ere we drop to the ground and sleep the long sleep. How much longer must we suffer for the folly that drives thee on?"

He only answered:

"Have patience, ye black cows. After a little ye shall rest."

Now the way led up a steep incline, and murmuring as of the wind soughing in the tree-tops, or the rushing of mighty waters, caught the ear.

"The journey nears its end," said Marfwe.

"It is well," muttered she who had spoken before, "else would I die."

The jungle growth became less dense and at the top of the rise they came out onto a small, bare plateau. Before them flowed the mighty river, and the women, forgetting their weariness, pressed forward eagerly for a better view, and seeing, gazed spellbound in awed amazement. Truly the Zambezi is the mother of all waters, and the story of ages is told in her rushing waters.



The song of the river was almost a lullaby. One by one the women dropped to the ground and slept the sleep of utter exhaustion. But Marfwe sat and watched knowing that Lady Zambezi is most dangerous when seemingly asleep. Ever changing like a capricious woman, she rushes on to her death at the place of thunder, to Mosi-oa-tunya—the Victoria Falls.

The sun set in the west and for a time all was dark, a brief lowering of the curtain before the rising of the moon. The apes hushed their chatter, and all was silent save for the droning of myriads of mosquitoes and the murmuring of the rushing waters. But still Marfwe stirred not. The moon rose and passed slowly on her journey and still Marfwe watched.

With the coming of the morning sun the women bestirred themselves lazily, then rising one by one went slowly down to the river to perform their ablutions.

"Guard ye well," warned Marfwe. "Perchance a schelm, a crocodile has its habitation hereabout. The scent is strong." And indeed an almost overpowering scent of musk filled the air.

"Get ready the food," Marfwe ordered when they returned, "for in an hour's time ye must be on your way to the kraal."

Silently they obeyed him and when they had eaten he said:

"Take with ye but little food, for I stay here until the work for which I came is accomplished. Return ye to your huts. Lightly laden ye should there arrive ere the setting of two suns. See that ye tell no man of my coming to this place, or that ye know aught of my purpose."

"Nay, lord," said one. "It is not fitting that we should leave thee here, alone, unattended. If ye would not have us all, at least choose one that she may stay and minister unto thee. It is not meet that one, such as thou art, should act the part of a poor man, or of a youth too young to have a wife to labor for him."

"What I have said, I have said," answered Marfwe. "See that ye keep my counsel."

"It is well," said another. "Of a truth we cannot tell thy purpose when it is not known unto us."

Marfwe affected not to hear, but sat watching the waters before him.

The woman shrugged her shoulders and turning to her companions, exclaimed:

"Tcht! Sisters. Marfwe the Warrior, hath become a vain dreamer. Let us be going. See, the sun is mounting higher, and the trail before us is long."

With one accord the women rose to their feet and cheering themselves with the song of the "home-coming," started on their return journey.

Long after the songs of the women had died away in the distance Marfwe sat motionless, his eyes fixed on the rolling river. It was as though he were bewitched by some mighty spell which held him fast bound.

"It is good," he muttered at length. "Here will I wait and watch. But now to build me a hut, for who shall say how long the watch will be?"

Three weeks Marfwe labored at his hut. Near to the place where the trail entered the river at the Ford did he build the hut, yet so cunningly did he build that it was hidden from the sight of any who might pass by that way. Three weeks did he labor, for he did not work steadily but sat for long hours watching the Ford.

He had seen the river in her many moods. Now flowing calm and placid like molten silver under the benign rays of the moon. Again whipped to a raging devil by the fury of a sudden storm, a black evil thing that showed its white fangs as it met opposition, from the half-sunken rocks which marked the Ford. And again, swollen out of all proportions by a tropical cloud-burst, and yellow with the mud washed down from the surrounding hills—no longer a leaping, living thing, scintillating with light, making rapierlike darts, but—a yellow, murky tide that threatened to overflow and inundate the land; a slow inexorable battering ram.

And the next day Marfwe had seen the mighty river—whimpering like a beaten thing, as though spent by its previous exertions—at its lowest ebb. At the Ford the water was only knee deep but Marfwe knew full well that the crossing was no less dangerous. On either side of the Ford were deep pools and always the current ran swift.

Besides at such times the crocodiles were more active. He had seen two of them being carried down-stream by the flood at the rate of five or six miles an hour. And these two had joined the other and had taken up their abode on the sand-bar which marked a turn in the river just below the Ford. And as Marfwe watched them, their bodies in the deep water, their lower jaws resting on the sand-bar in shallow water, their mouths wide open, sucking in the myriads of little fish washed down by the flood, he rubbed his hands together and chuckled gleefully.

One night—the moon was full and her light as clear as day—a buck, hard pressed by wild dogs, leaped past him into the river. The scent of musk suddenly became stronger. The water was whipped into a frenzy by the furious lashing of crocodiles's tails as they fought over their prey. Then silence save for one half-choked plaintive bleat and the howling of wild dogs disappointed at the loss of their meal.

Thereafter, when Marfwe hunted and made a kill, a goodly portion of the carcass he threw into the river and gloatingly watched the evil spirits of the river fight for the tasty bit.

Two moons had passed ere the coming of Marfwe to the place of the Ford, when he was disturbed at his evening meal by the shouting and songs of men on the opposite bank of the river.

He jumped to his feet and snatching his assagai ran to the river bank directly overlooking the Ford. On the other side, in the half light of the dying day, he could see some eight or ten natives.

He peered steadily until the lighting of a fire satisfied him that the travelers would not attempt the Ford that night.

"It is no matter," he said. "It is better to work by the light of day."

Nevertheless he slept but little that night, and many times left the shelter of his hut to pace impatiently on the bank of the river.

On the rising of the sun he watched them take the Ford, watched them climb slowly down the steep bank and enter the water. They held hands, forming a chain, and moved very slowly, the leader feeling his

way with a long stick. They shouted as they waded, and the leader and the one who followed in the rear incessantly beat the water with the sticks they carried, as a matter of protection.

Half-way across the line halted and now Marfwe could easily discern the features of the men.

The fierce light died out of his eyes, his weapons fell from his hands, and he squatted on his haunches. But still he watched, though his attitude was now one of a passive onlooker.

Once again the line moved forward—even slower than before, for here the river ran swifter and deeper.

Of a sudden the man at the end of the line stumbled and lost his hold on the man before him. Before he could recover he was swept off his feet and carried away by the current. He disappeared under the surface of the water and there was no further trace of him, save a reddish tinge in the water.

The only effect upon the others of their comrade's fate was to urge them to redouble their efforts.

"Greetings to thee," said Marfwe, when the travelers had finally reached the top of the steep bank and had thrown themselves on the ground that they might recover somewhat of their strength before they continued their journey.

He who had led the way across the Ford, looked up and grunted:

"Eh, bor. Greetings to thee also." Then seeing Marfwe's head ring he made a mock salute.

"Thy pardon, O Headman."

"It is of no matter," answered Marfwe indifferently.

"Of what kraal art thou?"

"Shumba's kraal, O Headman. Four days' trek to the west from here."

"And hast worked in the mines?"

"Even so."

"Then knowest thou of certain of my people—of the kraal of Marfwe?"

"Aye. They will be here in a few days. They come after the white man hath built a way across the river."

"What mean ye? Truly ye speak words of folly."



"Not so, old one. The white man says that too many hath gone to the land of the Great Spirits through the gate of the Ford—even as ye saw one go this day."

"It hath been this way since before time was. Can the white man change it?"

"Without doubt. Great is the power of the white man."

"Then why stayed ye not until the way was made safe?" asked Marfwe scoffingly.

"Twelve moons hath passed since we left the place of our fathers. We are eager to count our herds' increase and to greet our women folk. As for him who hath gone—what need to mourn for him? Shall not all that he hath be divided among us?"

"Aye, that is so," assented Marfwe.

The other looked at him curiously.

"Art waiting for others to come, O Headman, that ye may cross in safety? An it be so, we will cross again with thee."

"Nay. I have no desire to meet the fate of him who was one of ye."

"Then is it permitted—"

"Nothing is permitted," interrupted Marfwe. "But say now. When comes the white man?"

"On the morrow he should be here. Now farewell, O Headman. Already we have tarried too long."

At his words the others rose to their feet, grunted out a farewell salutation and soon, chattering and gesticulating like so many apes, were soon out of sight and hearing.

For a long time Marfwe stood gazing disdainfully after them.

"Tcht!" he spat out at length. "And it is such as these who hold themselves better than we old ones. They disdain the wisdom of the fathers and laboring under the earth like worms become like little children in whom there is no strength. Would we, in days gone by, have watched one of us carried away by the schelm as was this one to-day? Nay. But they, reckoning the wealth earned in the white man's service, wearing the white man's clothes and aping his ways, count that they have gained—not lost. And now," he burst out passionately, "the white man, not content with causing my people to become weak like little children, would come between me and the purpose for which I came to this place."

And on the morrow, as foretold by the returning native, came the white man.

Many porters the white man had with him—fully ten score, and all carried heavy loads.

Marfwe, hidden from view, watched them, as under the white man's direction, some stretched a stout cable from shore to shore, while others put together a large box—a punt it was—but Marfwe, not having seen or heard of one before, could not call it by that name.

He watched with eagerness the crossing of the workers who came to make fast the rope on his side of the river. There were many of them, and as they were linked together by the rope they carried, they had one hand free with which they beat the water continually. And such a noisy demonstration did they make that the crocodiles did not molest them.

When the rope had been tied securely to a tree jutting out from the bank, the leader of the workers signaled to the white man on the other side. Then the flat-bottomed boat was carried down the bank and floated on the water. The white man got in and pulled himself across by the rope.

Marfwe's eagerness to see more clearly the operation led him to part the bushes before him, and in doing so he brought himself in full view of the workmen.

They ordered him to come to them, and when he showed signs of flight surrounded him and brought him to the bank just as the white man clambered up to inspect the strength of the knots by which the rope was tied.

He glanced up as his men drew the struggling Marfwe toward him, and, pushing back his sun helmet, wiped the perspiration from his face.

Marfwe, seeing him now clearly, called out:

"How now, Dinabantu? Do ye stand idly by and let these black dogs of thine misuse me? This was not thy custom in other days when we hunted together. When I dragged ye away, sore hurt, from the charge of a 'rogue' elephant, ye did say that thy life was mine. But perchance ye have forgotten."

"What! Is it thou, Marfwe?" the white

man cried joyously. "Nay, I have not forgotten."

"Let go of that one," he ordered his men. "He is my friend. There is nought of evil in him."

"But what," he went on, turning again to Marfwe, "dost thou here? Me thought thou hadst forsaken the hunting trail, and surely thou art not on thy way to work in the mines!"

Marfwe scowled.

"Thou wert always a jest, O Dinabantu. Nay, I do but wait here to give a welcome to certain of my people."

"Thou meanest?" The white man sensed a world of sarcasm in Marfwe's tone.

"I mean just that. Say, O Dinabantu, why do not your people leave us black ones alone?"

"Art still nursing that grievance?"

"Aye, and ever shall. The white men are turning my people into a race of fools and weaklings. Old traditions are forgotten, old customs scorned, and in their place ye give us less than nothing."

"Yet is there now peace in the land where before our coming was naught but bloodshed—so that a man knew not if each setting sun would see his sojourn in this land ended."

"Better that, white man, better that than this. Then we were strong and lusty, and when one died it was the sudden death of battle or of the hunt. But now my people who hath worked in the mines return to us as though dead—yet living. Their spit of salutation is red—not white. Once their war songs would have sounded on the night air, but now they huddle before the fires and mourn for things unattainable."

"You hit us hard, Marfwe. The white man hath been somewhat of a curse upon this land. Yet heed ye, out of evil cometh much good."

"Mayhap, Dinabantu. But am I resolved that the evil shall not touch my kraal." Marfwe spoke fiercely.

The white man looked at him curiously, then as though changing the subject, he said lightly:

"And what mighty persons are these whom Marfwe, a headman, a rich headman, look ye, waits hither to greet."

"It is a small matter, perchance, and one that concerns me only. Yet, because thou art my friend, I will tell thee. Certain of the young men of my kraal disobeyed my commands and went, twelve moons ago, to labor in the mines. Aye, they set me on one side and made a mock of me before the people. Shall I then permit these to enter again into my place? I tell thee no."

"But couldst not send others? Warriors of thy kraal?"

"Aie! No! It is to my shame I say it. There are none left in the village who will listen to my commands in this matter."

"And thinkst that thou can turn them back?"

"That is in the hands of the Great Spirits."

"Then see ye to it that ye leave the matter in their hands, for friend of mine though thou art, shouldst thou break the law, I must deal harshly with thee."

"Aie! Thou wert ever just."

"It is well. Now let us talk of other things. Remember ye the day we—"

Sunrise the following day saw the white man and his safari once again on trek. But before he departed he made several trips across the river in the boat, taking with him the native who was to be left behind in charge of the ferry.

"See ye," he said in explanation, "how that I pull the boat over by the rope which is stretched from bank to bank. Heed well that, at the time of crossing, ye never let go of the rope, else will ye be carried swiftly away by the current. When I come again other ropes will I tie to the boat making things at all points safe. Also see to it that ye make the boat fast at such times ye are not using it." Other commands the white man gave relating to the toll the ferryman should take and like matters.

"Heed my commands well," he had concluded, "for should I hear that thou hast in any way disobeyed, punishment will follow. In a month I will return to make the way truly safe."

Thirty days later the white man came again to the Ford, and signaled for the boat to be brought over for him.

Then he who had been left behind as



ferryman came out on the opposite bank and, gesticulating violently pointed downstream.

"The blamed fool," ejaculated the white man. "He failed to moor the boat and it was washed away. Bring that fool here," he ordered, "that I may hold speech with him."

When his commands had been obeyed and the shrinking ferryman stood before him, the white man said:

"Do not men call me 'The Just One'?"

"Aye, lord."

"Then tell thy story before I hand thee over to be beaten."

"In this way it happened. Thou must know that since thy departure many days since, many people have I taken to and fro across the river. Aye, it seemed that all the people in this land had heard of this wonder and came hither that they might cross the water and yet remain dry. And I dealt justly by them as ye decreed and charged as ye ordered. And at all times Marfwe—he who was here when ye came that other time—made the journey with me. Him I did not charge for he aided me in the work of crossing. A strange man, Marfwe, Inkosi. A man of few words."

"Which thou art not," interrupted the white man. "However, say on, that the story may be fully told."

"Aie! Have patience, lord. A strange man I say was Marfwe. Oftentimes when but half-way across the river he would hold on to the rope with his hands and lift himself out of the boat, and so hanging by his hand would make the shore. Truly the strength of an elephant is in those arms.

"There came a time, we had been working hard that day and I was busy preparing the evening meal, when we were hailed from the opposite side.

"Answering their hail, I cried: 'Who art thou?'

"Men of Marfwe's kraal. Hasten and get us, O sluggard."

"Now was I of a mind to let them bide until the morning, but Marfwe said: 'Bide ye here. I alone will go. They are my people. It is for them I have watched these many days.'

"And so I suffered him to go, Inkosi.

Have I not said that I was tired, having labored hard?

"Without trouble Marfwe took the boat across and I saw the men go down to him. It seemed to me that they talked long ere they entered the boat.

"Slowly the boat started to cross again, for it was heavily laden and only Marfwe was pulling. They were but twenty spear lengths from the bank, Inkosi—so near that I could hear the men jeering Marfwe, urging him to pull harder—when Marfwe stumbled and all but lost his hold on the rope. Aie! and how they laughed at him. Again he slipped and this time the rope went out of his hold. He jumped for it and held it, but the boat had gone from under him and was floating swiftly away.

"Swiftly I say the boat was carried away, and the men who had laughed now cried aloud in fear. Aie! It was as though they saw the death before them. They tried to change the course of the boat—using their hands as paddles, but it was in vain. One jumped into the water and swam for the shore. A bare spear's length he went and then was dragged under. And the others, now sensing indeed the fate in store for them, for crocodiles swam beside the boat, screamed like little children and huddled up together as though for protection. And this but made the end more speedy. The boat overturned and then, Inkosi—

"Ah, the screams still sound in my ears at night.

"Of a truth the evil spirits of the river feasted well that day.

"And now Marfwe, who had this while been hanging from the rope, watching, acted as one bereft of his senses. He laughed aloud, Inkosi, the laugh of one well satisfied. Then he got to the bank in safety, nor spoke further to me of the 'happening.'

"On the morrow he departed for his own place.

"Tell the white man, when he comes again," he said, "that Marfwe watches no more. The vengeance of the Great Spirits is a just vengeance, and evil shall not enter my kraal."

"The story is told, Inkosi," concluded the ferryman. "I pray thee let the punishment be light."

# Janie and the Waning Glories

by Raymond S. Spears

Author of "Janie Pays a Debt of Honor," "Dancing Laura," "A Shortage in Perfumes," etc.

## (A "JANIE FRETE" STORY)

### CHAPTER XXX.

#### THE CAVE-LABORATORY.

**J**ANIE FRETE, a tenderfoot rancher. had been living in a dreamland of wonders. She was in the West; she was on the sunny slope of a desert mountain range, with thousands of square miles of desert valley literally under her gaze—and miles beyond miles of other mountains that extended into the distances at the horizons, north and south, and there the heights danced in mirages, with mirage lakes about them, and sand-storms swirling in the middle distances, like sunshine ghosts.

Janie, whose heart was aflutter with the sheer joy of living, now found herself awakening from one dreamland into another. Her men, the cow-punchers, whom she had hired to build up her fences, run her ranch lines, and even rope a few mavericks, which, they said, were just over the range, had also taken seriously her remarks that she just loved them all.

They really understood—and if they all paid ardent homage to her, they also never trespassed beyond bounds, and not one of them indicated any least hope in his heart that Janie would bestow on him any special favor. So she favored them all, and showed her appreciation as they showed theirs.

She slipped away to the laboratory, hidden up the mountain. She rode or walked up to it, and, leaving her pony hitched in the stable recess, she would enter the place

with something of a feeling of entering a cave.

It was, in fact, a wind-gash in a soft strata of the mountain. Trenal had cut out the rounded and uneven places, squared up the back of the gash, and built a firm masonry wall across the front, and on both ends, with windows of ample size, which were, as remarked, carefully screened from sunshine reflection.

Here were his scientific books, here the chemicals, and here the apparatus for his researches, or amusement. Files of magazines, an encyclopedia of an edition printed shortly before his murder, even letters in a basket "to be answered," indicated another tragic structure not so far from the ancient works of the cave-dwellers, who left their tools and affairs never to return, and for scientists to come in, some day, and ponder on what fate had overtaken them. Janie, here, knew the fate of the builder and student, the man who had, with his own hands, put everything here in its place.

There was a typewriter, with a little dust on it; there were the ranch paper, envelopes and memoranda printed heads; several letter-files indicated that the man had not wholly broken all his connections with the world, and Janie, after a time, realized that she had a duty to perform.

Rather methodically, she began to investigate the premises, wondering if she would not find some clue to his past, things which she had never known. It occurred to her

This story began in the All-Story Weekly for May 15.



that possibly he had relatives, and her examination of the letters, one by one, disclosed a loneliness equal to her own, as regards blood-relations.

Mostly, he had written to publishers of books, seeking some book that they couldn't supply. He wanted an analysis, for example, of soil alkalis, such as prevailed throughout Nevada, and other Western States. He was unable to find more than most cursory local investigations—and there were indications that he had begun a series of examinations of Thirsty Creek Valley, with the intention of writing a monograph on the subject of the composition of the dessicated earth there, the degree of alkali content that permitted no vegetation of any kind, the degree that permitted sage, and the local salt grasses, and finally the composition of the mountain slopes, from the pure quartz rock, or rock in place, down through the talus heap, to the dead level of alkali bottom.

Janie, always alert and eager in the presence of scientific facts, spent a long time over the man's note-books, and where his memoranda-sheets showed work done, but not yet recorded, and analyses made, and only partly worked out. It was plain from the notes that Trenal had ended a day's work, putting things in temporary order, expecting to return in another day, or hour—and there they were, as he had left them. He was dead now.

She discovered a little picture-frame, a sheet of paper under the glass. It was just a bit of pencil-note, and there were many figures scattered over it, with symbols and scratch-words. For a minute she looked at it, wondering what could have been precious about such a thing as that?

Then, with a burst, her memory recognized it. Under one of the groups of figures and half-formed words she saw a sharp, quick pencil-stroke.

She read the formula with odd ease—she recognized it—and could have burst into tears; it was the last day's record, there in the shop with Trenal, when she had hastily noted the secret formula of that fur-trade research. The photograph which Trenal had so often looked at had been made just before she made this note—and

now she saw another evidence of the man's regard for her.

"Oh, but I couldn't help it!" she cried aloud.

On the wooden back of the framed note was written:

Janie's Work Sheet—the success.

In the library were books which disclosed the man's study—every article in three encyclopedias discussing deserts, stones, chemistry of soils, and all chemicals, had been read and certain phases underscored. There were government documents by the hundred, the most studied of them being a rebound book that contained the analysis of several hundred rocks.

She found a piece of stone as large as her two fists, with a number pasted on it. She found the number in a series-index, turned to the note-book, and there was the analysis—an astonishing thing:

Gold—134.5 ounce ton.

"I needn't really starve for lack of money!" the man had written under it, adding: "Oh, Janie! If it was wealth that would win you!"

She shut the note-book hastily, but put it away tenderly. In a way this was her first complete understanding of what it meant to a man to have met her, and wooed her in vain. She had always thought of men who went away from her, unable to restrain their passion in her presence, as weak, or just wilful; but here was an indication of the years a man had suffered for love of her, suffering that had not abated.

Her imagination pictured him working there, engrossing his whole attention upon whatever thing he had to do—his magnificent brain concentrated upon what must have been a most useful series of investigations—and then, at intervals, unable to hold down or keep under his suppressed and unsatisfied longings, stopping to look at her picture, or to jot down some phrase, as that one under the record of a stone that contained two thousand six hundred dollars' worth of gold to the ton—no hint where the ledge of stone was located, but just that suggestion that if it had been money he could have found millions.

"I'm glad he didn't come with it!" she shook her head. "Oh, I'm glad he did know that it wasn't money I asked of men. Oh, I couldn't! Couldn't!"

It was her appeal, her justification—that she just couldn't; at least, not to any man that she had, as yet, met.

Janie loved the spirit that she found in the cave-laboratory. The bungalow, down the mountain, on the slope, was full of the ranch life, the ranch feeling, and she loved that. But she could understand why Trenal had never carried his work down to the bungalow.

He had kept all his trained science in the cave, and had kept the bungalow, except for its rather recent and foreign model, wholly under the illiterate influence of alkali plain and desert mountains. He kept his two lives separate—and Janie was glad that he had not betrayed his heart even to the extent of a picture of her in the ranch work-house.

The letter in the man's papers in the bank, she blessed as the means that brought her to this beautiful land, and enabled her to add another to the many regions she had known.

Nevertheless, she had just a little of the feeling that it was selfish of her—her knowing this beautiful and unusual cave-dwelling of a heart that had ached for her.

"I'm punished!" she thought, "for what I couldn't help, too. But, oh, I do love it so. If he only sees; if only his heart now can feel that I did—I did like him. I was true blue to his friendship; oh, so much truer than he could understand when he was alive."

"Friend! Friend!" her conscience mocked her, as it always did, and she found her eyes filling, as another word of vaster meaning came to her thoughts. Then Janie had one of those moments of self-accusation, of recklessness and of yielding, which had some man been there—just the right kind of an understanding man—he might have wrung from her unwilling and reluctant mind the answer that her heart always longed to give.

Janie found a clear statement in a letter carbon, without address, which eased her

mind as regards the ranch. There was no address, no hint of who was to receive the letter:

DEAR HARB:

Yours of the 11th drifted in and you know where I am. Nuff said. As for the rest of it, I don't believe there is a chance in the world that there are any survivors of the rest of my family. There is nobody, and I'm going to leave the matter in your hands. You will see to it all, I know. The enclosed memoranda covers the ground, and you'll think it reads like a dime-novel romance, with the map and everything. Come out when you can, and you'll see God's own country—where the mountains and deserts are at peace.

Yours—

She searched in vain for anything that would connect up with this letter. Her quick mind discovered its importance instantly, but there were the plain statements: "There is nobody," and "I'm going to leave the matter in your hands." From the context it was clear that the "matter" was important, and probably related to property, but it was without support in the other correspondence.

Janie found no other personal correspondence; Trenal had possessed friends—all the friends he wanted, in the old days—but it was apparent that he had not kept them. Out here in the West he had made acquaintances, but inquiry among the people of Racklack, Greengrass, and over on the main-line railroad, when she trucked in her supplies, revealed only acquaintances: people to whom he talked about ranching, from whom he obtained information, and with whom he traded.

As to any revelation of his intimate affairs, his past, he was as buried in oblivion as many another man. She knew he was a New Yorker, but no one out there had ever known that fact.

Janie kept the secret of the cave-laboratory. No one knew what she had found, or that her rides out into the wilderness were more than mere practise jaunts over mountains, or through the slopes. She brought in game that she killed, and as it was a considerable climb to the hiding-place, with several different routes available, her appearance did not betray her secret. She told herself that she would respect the place, and preserve it as a kind of retreat,



to which she could go and, like ancient peoples, commune with the spirits, the muses, the mountain gnomes and fastnesses.

# CHAPTER XXXI.

## NO COUNTRY TO ASK QUESTIONS.

HER preoccupation prevented her from observing too closely the affairs of her ranch. She did not pester her men with demands for information that anybody ought to know without asking—Janie had a little of the feeling of the strangeness and even the mystery of the desert and mountains. Her outfit were busy men, they sure tired their horses out, and their hours were irregular and fully occupied.

"I just mustn't annoy them," Janie said to herself. "It does bother people so to have somebody always asking foolish questions."

In that spirit she kept her distance and refrained from making a nuisance of herself. Her attitude clearly satisfied the men, who carried themselves more and more at ease, talkative, and even loquacious at times about what Janie knew was the least important of the ranch affairs.

They would talk an hour about the outlaw burros they used up into the Waning Glories, telling stories about how they escaped prospectors to run free forever. Just to show her what one was like, Chippy, Sugar, and Dishpan, after a hard day's riding, cornered and roped one of the burros and dragged him down for her to inspect, and spent odd hours for days thereafter breaking the ugly little brute and taming his spirit, which had heretofore always been free and independent—for he was without brand.

Janie heard Screaming Eagle scolding Chippy one morning. It was a low, angry scolding; and Janie caught only an occasional word.

"Don't you know what chances you take?" Screaming Eagle demanded. "What will happen if—"

The two started in confusion when Janie appeared, and Screaming Eagle gave the fellow an eloquent glance, as she said:

"Look't him, Miss Frete! Don't he look bad all over? You would not believe me if I told you what I know about him. He is one scoundrel, indeed. I have to keep my eyes on him all the while."

"Yes?" Janie inquired, and Screaming Eagle burst into a laugh, that Chippy joined, as he slipped away hurriedly.

"I talk to all those fellows." Screaming Eagle shook her head. "But it doesn't do any good; too late now."

Janie hesitated, but asked no questions. This was no place, no country for asking questions; she must keep silent, and in due course what she should know she would know; there was laughter, that ceased on her approach; there was whispering discussion, which obviously shifted to minor affairs that she knew all about; Snowflake and Tarcass traveled together, and they held a hundred earnest talks together; Sugar lost his bearing of reticence, and around the ranch buildings was a whooping, wild-riding cowboy, performing a hundred feats of horsemanship that Janie knew were brilliant—knew would have made him the favorite of a motion-picture company.

When he rode away to guide the Marvelando cattle-rustler hunters, he was at the full prime of his eager excitement. As he rose, standing in his stirrups, his hat raised. Janie was conscious of the full deviltry of the stony-faced youth, and as long as she lived, she would never forget the glance the strange eyes gave her—eyes that only supreme fires made light up to their full color, a subtle gray with depths of a diamond fleck, a pure pink flash.

So he swept away, and her other men turned to ride with Valero—who was whipped and goaded into demanding a chance to redeem himself; and the men all turned to look at Janie with such expressions as she had never seen before among them.

She wondered what they could be thinking about, and on the instant she felt the presence of a new spirit in the occasion; not one of them but knew he might ride into a bullet, back there in the Waning Glories. They were one of the posses riding that day into the breaks. To the north was Sheriff Placard and his own hearties;

to the south were the Marvelando riders, with Sugar riding to join and guide them; right there, her own men, with the despised Valero, were going in on their own hook. Screaming Eagle, her arms all drawn up with emotion, walked sidewise, watching them depart, waving their long guns, their rifles, and unconsciously she clung to Janie, her breath short and hissing through her teeth.

Well, the women folk might tremble at the scene. Janie knew the things that might happen—wild-man hunting back there in the breaks was certain; she had seen her boys riding down mountains, across sliding shale, with high bounds over well-watered sage-brush, through cañon gulches, and stirring the dust of all kinds of land, from pure alkali to striking fire with their shod horses on rough quartz-ledges.

She had seen them doing those things—at a distance; they did not show off before her, but sometimes she happened to see some feat that was an antic of sheer animal spirits; she knew that they had been gathering the mavericks for her herd back in the breaks; but cattle-rustlers had come along to disturb the amiable round-ups.

"Oh, they're not worth it," she murmured.

"The cattle?" Screaming Eagle breathed. "Not worth it?"

"Oh, my dear. All my herd now or to come could not possibly be worth the life of one of those brave men."

"They are like cats." Screaming Eagle laughed uncertainly at her wit. "Cats with nine lives each—O-ah! Burke has been killed five or six times; look, remember his shoulder? He was shot by a—by a man with a .45-90 bullet. He ought to have died—first. But—"

"The other man?" Janie asked.

"Oh, he died—first. Two-three bullets, shot in left-handed by that devil of a manitou, Burke."

"He has killed a man!" Janie cried. "My Burke!"

"But what, after one has been shot by a—somebody—is it not to kill back, eh? Is it not?"

"Oh, but I did not think that of him. Perhaps Dishpan—"

"Dishpan nor Bear-Jaw have never killed a man in their life. Isn't Chippy such a nice, gentle fellow, eh?"

"I love him. He's so good-natured."

"If he comes back I tell him that," Screaming Eagle laughed, and Janie begged.

"Oh, please," Janie cried. "He wouldn't understand."

"And he's such a gentle fellow, eh? All he did was kill three men one time—right and left, bang-bang-bang!"

"My Chippy a murderer." Janie could hardly speak.

"Such a nice, gentle fellow," Screaming Eagle mused mockingly. "Too bad he kill so many."

"Oh—but my ideals," Janie cried.

"I tell you now so you need not be surprised," Screaming Eagle said softly. "Your boys ride out—not to be killed! They have gone to fight for you; to protect you—yours!"

"I do understand," Janie whispered. "Oh, I want them to—to be safe. I hope—I hope the outlaws surrender. The odds are great—all the posses after them—perhaps they'll surrender."

Screaming Eagle turned and looked at Janie. The breed girl's face was drawn; but although strained with anxiety she was still pretty, and the black, straight hair swept back from her forehead revealed a beautiful brow; and she leaned back to gaze at Janie's face wonderingly.

"They don't surrender—not those men. Wounded, yes; their ammunition all gone, yes; their friends all shot down and surrounded, the best is to surrender—and hope, wait for a chance to escape; but in their hearts—I tell you they do not surrender."

"Not these men—not the Waning Glory break fellows. All their lives they have been outlaws—or they are men wronged and bounded in the name of the law. O-ah! I know! I have not lived in a schooner-wagon for nothing—I have not studied those books for nothing!"

"It is the psychology. Did you see him—Sugar—as he ride away? He go to ride with the bullets; it was happiest of all his life, that minute. They live, his kind, for the madness of a ride—with death. How he laugh! Sure! He'll guide them—the



Marvelando crowd. What sport! Hunting men, or being hunted—wolf or hound!”

Janie could confront danger herself with the equanimity of an intrepid soul, well prepared and fortified; now she was waiting while her men were riding away to do battle at the law's behest.

Tarcass and Snowflake led the way up the valley to go through the gap at Two-Day Spring. With them Valero was riding in and out, unable to find a side partner.

“And Valero represents the law,” Janie remarked, half aloud, upon which Screaming Eagle gave a scornful sniff, half snort.

“He would not go, but you made him. He wish himself dead already, and I bet in two hours he be in a devil of a mess—those boys!”

“They'll just ignore him,” Janie declared. “They won't—”

“It is enough; for Valero to be ignored back in those breaks—oh, quite enough.”

Janie tried to read the thought in the laughing breed's expression, but obtained no satisfaction. In this hour the ranch mistress felt for the first time an utter outside feeling, as though every one around her knew more about her affairs than she did. Valero had come to get men to help hunt the cattle-stealers, and there had been joyful response. It was, however, Screaming Eagle who knew the details, not herself.

She suddenly was made aware of how little she really did know about her men, their lives, their interests, their thoughts. A question rose in her mind about Tarcass, and then about Chippy, who had fought and killed three men; Snowflake himself was a big fellow, intensely reticent behind a mask of good humor and quite mad horsemanship.

“But good men for me to develop my ranch,” Janie was glad to think. “I'd trust them a thousand times before I would Valero. Screaming Eagle, I'm going to saddle my horse; I'm going to ride to-day. It's an owner's job. I must—”

“Saddle heem—O-ah!” Screaming Eagle submitted. “The best one for you, that one Tarcass give you. Be all ready, but not too hasty to ride with them; not with those men. When it is time to ride—for life—I bet one of them will come back—”

“The rustlers might come this way?” Janie asked.

“I bet the devil don't know what happen now,” Screaming Eagle replied harshly. “But I bet he is well satisfy by the looks of t'ings.”

While the two talked Chippy was down in the alfalfa-field, morosely snapping the horses with the end of his lariat, the whole length of which he could stretch out with twists of his wrist. When Janie brought down her saddle and bridle he rolled his eyes up at her and at Screaming Eagle.

For a second he looked at the Indian girl, and then, without a word, saddled the horse that Tarcass had ridden to Thirsty Creek Valley, and led, starved and weary, to Janie's ranch, not knowing that Janie had taken it.

He saddled one for Screaming Eagle, too, and tied a horse for himself outside the fence near the other two, saddled and bridled.

Then, restlessly, looking in all directions, studying the horizon, figuring the hammer and trigger of a rifle, and looking into his holster-pistols every minute or two, Chippy, serious and sober, his steps gliding and sliding and pacing, marched about, on guard. He borrowed Janie's binoculars to look at cattle, miles away, when they stirred uneasily; his gaze swept the whole front of the Waning Glory Range.

Half the time Screaming Eagle walked with him, whispering, and the rest of the time she was with her mistress, tense and alert with excitement. Such was the waiting when all the country was up—hunting or being hunted.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### VALERO RIDES.

VALERO, conscious of the contempt of his fellows in the cavalcade, rode among them alone. His horse found him a place immediately behind Tarcass and Snowflake as they pressed eagerly diagonally up the long slope, and at last turned westward through the Two-Day Spring Pass; their pace quickened here, especially when over the divide.

For a little way the men and the breed Indians galloped down the steep grade. Their low, excited cries indicated their war-path exhilaration.

Snowflake, however, checked them all, and they resumed the fast walk of their plains gait—here a breathlessly trying speed, at times, when they circled around a steep bluff, when they went straight up some short-cut bank, and then they plunged down a palisaded bluff.

It was to Valero a startling experience; the men held to a straight course over what he would have thought places that it was impossible to go, up or down. But soon they seemed obliged to turn, and in gulches where there was no sunshine, in clumps of the gnarled mountain-cedar, and in open, barren alkali flats, they swept in turns and circles, turning sharp corners where caving mountains fell upon levels in sliding heaps.

They rode with no least attention to the man who was in store-bought semi-military dress, army shoes, officers' leggings, and clothes, shirt and hat to match. Valero was hard put to it at times, clinging to his saddle when his horse—whose surefootedness he blessed—was scrambling with one side against a high mountain, and the other dangling over a curving brink from the depths beyond which no sound of falling debris returned—the height was so terrible.

Then they rode down a grassy, sage-grown slope into a narrow valley. The men were looking to the northward, and they started across that bottom on a canter, but Valero, glancing at the ground, saw something.

"Oh, boys!" he cried, and jumped down to look at the ground.

The other riders glanced around, and then would have gone on only Snowflake threw up his hand in a gesture of halt. Snowflake turned back and looked at the tracks.

"Somebody's been here," he turned to the others. "There's hoss-shoes."

Valero, rehabilitated in a measure, spoke up:

"They're going that way—kind of—"

"Northeast, looks like." Tarcass glanced at the sky.

"Yes, sir; that's the easy way; we'll

follow 'em, and that 'll lead right to those damned rustlers, don't you think?"

"Yes, sir. Mr. Valero, I b'lieve you've a level head. Could you keep their tracks—that trail?"

"Oh, yes. I've tracked deer all over the mountains."

"Then you ride up the valley here and we'll get up high where we can see is there any dust flying."

"You betcha!" Valero declared. "You boys cover the flanks."

The riders swung into two parties up both sides of the flat and began to climb the sides of the valley. Valero, quickening the stride of his horse, trotted up the cattle-trail in which he had seen the fresh signs. The cattle had been driven up there within twenty-four hours or so, and behind them were horsemen. Valero knew those tracks.

Accordingly, feeling like a regular among the riders, and delighting in the fact that it had been his own discovery—that cattle-trail—Valero drew his rifle from its holster and held it with the butt on his hip as Snowflake carried his carbine.

"They're dandies! They're wonders—those men," Valero said to himself as he glanced up the slopes to where his companions were climbing. "Janie's sure picked a gang of mighty competent men. They got a swing to 'em, and they work together; I never saw men working together better than they do."

He could at least appreciate their unity of action. Soon they were out of his hearing, but for an hour he could see them, at first all the time, and then as they topped a rise of ground or appeared around a point on the valley side. Even after they were out of sight he could see the dust they raised in little yellow puffs against the misty blue of the sky—a grayish mistiness which kept the sun glowing rather than shining.

Valero noticed it, but was sure it meant nothing. What meant more to him, however, was the fact that the sun was away down out of the zenith, and where there were mountain peaks to the westward, shadows were cut across the landscape away above the valley where he rode—shadows that were blue and purple, and then bars and shafts of sunshine, which were through



dust of gold and silver, real dust, at that. And, besides, that strange, whitish mist of the upper skies.

The other horsemen disappeared. Quiet, absolute quiet, was in that valley, and every step his horse took he heard the quiet fractured. He heard saddle strains, the click of his horse's teeth as they mouthed the bit, and his own heart thumping, started bounding by the ride which was more difficult than any he had ever attempted before, despite his previous feeling of experience and habit.

He looked back, wondering if he had outrun his companions, whose mountainous ridges must have been harder to climb than the valley bottom. He saw no one, and no distinct clouds of dust—no signal of the earth that riders were passing by.

A deer sprang up from a little clump of cedars and dashed away up the mountain, bounding high as mule-deer do, but stopped not a hundred yards distant to look down at him.

Valero threw up his rifle, but took it down again.

"I'm hunting bigger game," he thought to himself.

Bigger game, indeed. This was a man-hunt, and he was riding out bravely to meet at their own door, muzzle to muzzle—he had a faint desire to run into the gang of bandits, and, single handed, overpower them.

That would make newspaper stories, and Janie Frete—well, Uintah Forelane would read the accounts and fairly worship the bold gun-fighter, whose prowess, perhaps, neither one of them had fully appreciated before.

Valero, not really bold enough to be very bad, yet bad enough to be at times quite bold, had opportunity now to recall his youth and his early manhood—the little scrape that he was ashamed to face, and his coming West to make a fortune and wait for the cowardly little scandal to die out, and its victim to be forgotten. He shuddered now, thinking of that freckle-faced, big-eyed, gaunt-framed country girl of his youth.

Now he laughed, for wasn't Uintah Forelane fine-looking and bright—wonderfully

intelligent? Also, there was Janie Frete, another one who needed a—well, he wondered just what she did need. At least, having inveigled her to part with some thousands of good simoleons, he couldn't imagine any limit to the possibilities of his success in winning Janie.

Quite an imperfect kind of a scoundrel in his way, Valero, of course, did not know his limitations, nor even dream that he had any limits; least of all, as he let his horse slow to a fast walk, did he divine that now he was facing a man's problems—the actualities of the Waning Glory breaks. All he saw was a narrowing valley, cattle-tracks, and horse-tracks, until a shade seemed to cross the landscape, and a chill seemed to fall out of a gloomy sky.

He stopped and looked around; on either side were perpendicular walls of a gulch, rather than a little valley. The bottom of the gulch, however, disclosed cattle-tracks and boulders.

He looked ahead into the winding cattle-trail, and there touched his heart a clammy feeling: a desperado, a whole band of desperadoes might easily be lurking up there in that water-wash, behind a rock or ledge; at that very moment, perhaps a rifle was leveled at his heart.

Valero looked back hastily, thought he heard one of his own companions walking his horse away up on the mountain; he dared not, for shame, turn back. Accordingly, he entered the darker shadows ahead and watched his horse's ears for warning of the scent of a strange man, or sound of a rear-guard coming into position to repel the representatives of the law.

Spurred to a kind of courage, he went on up the gorge and over a divide and down the other side. It was a display of a kind of grit—men as weak and afraid had made reputations for courage when they found themselves cornered as he felt he was cornered.

On the far side, the gulch opened into a plateau-flat that was only a few score feet lower than the top of the little ragged ridge on the southwest side. The cattle had gone out upon this plateau, and there they were in the gathering twilight—a hundred head at least! Valero uttered a low

whistle of delight. This was where the cattle-thieves had thrown their prey together, hoping they would escape the attention of the pursuers. But they had not escaped the keen eyes and quick wit of Tremaine Valero. The horseman, taking advantage of a number of odd pinnacle obtrusions of rock standing in the bare plain, went out, leading his horse, to get a good look at one of the animals.

"Yes, that's sure as I'm borned," he thought. "That's one of my own; that's a double-headed serpent brand for a fact. And that's a Y-R in the bit rings. It's a mixed herd; we've saved 'em."

### CHAPTER XXXIII

#### LOST IN THE BREAKS.

HE was tired; very tired. He had not had such a day's work in ages. He felt soft, sore and worn out. He looked along the edge of the plateau to see if any of his men had come into sight, but none were in sight.

Valero felt rather good about that fact. He had found these cattle himself, and he would stand guard over them, and in the morning, when the men showed up, they would see that he wasn't any greenhorn, but a regular plainsman, a desert horseman and cattleman. If he was a bought-in rancher, he now could claim—in fact, he would be acclaimed without any demand—a rancher of skill as well as of property.

While there still remained light to read by, he drew from an inner pocket his long wallet, and unfolded a paper within. This paper was important. It had been written in acknowledgment of Uintah's angry demand that he should not drop the project to round up the Trenal animals and ship the brands to market—a hundred thousand, perhaps two hundred thousand dollars' worth of beef. Uintah's vehement telegram had alarmed Valero, and his discretion never had been overwhelmingly in control of his actions.

Hereby I convey to Tremaine Valero, in return for consideration of one dollar (\$1.00), full control and ownership of all the cattle on my ranch

of the Horned A Brand. Said conveyance good and sufficient only in case of my death or disappearance for a period of more than one year.

IRVING TRENAL.

"That does it," Valero smiled. "He gave it to me account of trouble with the White Face outfit, so I have my mortgage protected."

He folded up the paper carefully, and looked back with complete satisfaction to his protection of what he now considered his rights—his as much as any one's.

Some of the cattle were lying down and others were chewing their cuds. Valero could see that they were tired, and some were decidedly weak-kneed. It was evidence of the run the herd had had when the rustlers drove them back into the breaks; they must be fifteen or twenty miles back. Valero walked away from them a little, but something now touched his lips—thirst.

He looked at his saddle. What a fool he was not to have brought his water-bag! His horse, too, was open-mouthed and thirsty. Valero looked up and down, and then he divined that the cattle-rustlers had left the animals there unattended while they went after more, or while they awaited the blowing over of the storm aroused by the discovery of the cattle-raiding.

Valero told himself that they must have abandoned the cattle, because of the escape of the two cowboys at whom they had fired on the north end of Thirsty Creek Valley when the alarm was given.

"They couldn't possibly drive cattle through these breaks. Not a regular herd; they couldn't. Why, it's much as I could do to get through on horse-back."

It did not occur to Valero that what he could do on horse-back was an odd criterion by which to judge what wild riding habitual outlaws could do with loot on the hoof, but in any event he had there before him a matter of seven thousand or eight thousand dollars' worth of cattle in the flesh, and he had discovered them all himself.

Mounting his tired horse, he drove along the edge of the plateau, and half a mile away his animal pricked up its ears eagerly and began to step along with lively tread. At a sag in the level plateau, or mesa, some cattle were scrambling up out of a ravine



or water-wash, returning to the good feed on top. Valero didn't stop to figure on this little agricultural phenomenon in that geological area.

He let his horse scramble down the cattle-path and down in the black gorge, he found, with matches, the spring where they had been drinking. He went up as close to the outpour as he could get, and dipped up water in his broad-brimmed hat, drinking, if not with gusto, at least with great thirst.

His horse, too, drank, and a little later they went into shelter, where, removing a few cobbles, enabled Valero to spread down his saddle-blanket, "like a cowboy," as he smiled to himself, and with his tired head on his saddle go to sleep.

He roused himself once to see the moon-shine glistening and reflecting on mountain tops through a slit in the earth down the cañon. The moon also revealed clouds that were rolling.

"Pshaw! It doesn't rain here once in fifty years," Valero comforted himself as he saw flares of lightning in the little section of cloud that was visible. Assured by so good an authority, he went to sleep again.

But it did rain; the storm boiled up out of the breaks, apparently, and it spread out over the earth, from everywhere and from nowhere in particular. It splashed down from the high places of the sky in huge drops, in spray that foamed from the stony mountains, and it hissed near at hand, roared in the vast distances; in all his life Tremaine Valero had never known before what a cloudburst meant, the real, living meaning of the term.

Immediately the storm broke, he managed by the lightning to saddle and bridle his horse, which was beginning to grow anxious. He looked about, with sudden realization of what a fool he was, camping down in the bottom of a gorge like that, where, on every side, was the wear and tear of floods; and on such a threatening night as that, too!

Without ado, he mounted and urged his horse up the slit in the earth back toward the mesa top, where, out on the levels, he would be in a kind of safety, at least. Already the water was pouring down the incline in rivulets, growing deeper and

deeper as the gathering of the waters in the slight slope of the mesa sought the edge of the cut bank above the spring.

How he made his way up that slope he never did know; but the horse never forgot. It was, toward the last, like ascending a cascade of mud, quicksand and water all in one. But the animal, sure-footed and faithful, urged by the man on its back, scrambled over the edge and at a heavy gallop back into the safety of the tableland.

There the thunder roared from cliff to cliff of the mountains to the north and east, and the wash of the downpour, flowing on the caked earth, among the bunches of grass and past the sage-brush roots, ran down the slight incline toward the spring gulch, and in increasing waves made the leap over the brink, and fell, coiling and roaring, down the gulch into the cañon and on into the mysterious depths of the breaks.

It was a brief storm—only an hour of a little longer in duration. But it left a very good average seasonal precipitation over a few square miles of that part of the country. When the wind blew by, and the clouds disappeared as rapidly as they had come; when the moon broke out of a crystalline sky, and when all the landscape was glistening with wet surfaces, even Valero was was compelled to bear witness to the wonderful brilliance of the scene.

But the beauty hardly compensated, in his mind, for the chill that settled upon him, and left shivering with raw cold, till he bethought himself of his horse-blanket, and then wrapped in this wet, soggy thing, but warm from the back of the animal, he managed to get a kind of comfort against the lee of one of the rock protrusions above the mesa level.

Dawn, with warm sunshine, roused him. The cattle were all gone; they had stampeded in the storm, naturally. He could have cried, thinking of what must have happened to that eight thousand dollars. But after a time he discovered the animals away to the northward, still on the mesa, where they had run for a little way, and then, like their breed, come to a stop after a mile or two.

Old-time long-horned, rangy Texas steers must have raced for miles on such a scare

as that, but not these well-bred, short-legged, white-face beef cattle. They had neither the wind nor the will to continue long on a romp.

Valero rode out to them, and, as they were pretty well bunched up, managed to get them started, and by violent riding along their flanks and at the rear, with one or two shoots to get the leaders going right, he herded them southward, a feat that must have cost him five pounds of his own weight, at least, so energetic was his exercise.

"I'll drive 'em back down that cañon I came up on," he told himself, but when he came to the gap he found that he couldn't get the cattle into it. Thousands of tons of boulders and gravel and cobbles had been precipitated down the steep side hills of the pass, and they filled the lower part of the near wash with a tumbled mass of stone that he could only just get into on horseback. The cattle, with only one herder to obey, simply mutinied, and not one would undertake the climb.

"I'll have to get help," Valero decided very quickly. "I suppose that's the easiest way out—down the valley and swing over to the east, the way we came in."

He was hours going through the new washout. Beyond the divide the little pass was ever worse than on the near side, and the narrow gorge had been swept with avalanches of slide from the sides, and cut through with rivers of water, sand, gravel, cobblestones and huge boulders. Worst of all was a sheet of hard stone strata that had caved in and now stood a steep backed dam between two banks of broken layers of crumbling sandstone.

But Valero fought his way through, leading his horse, trembling lest the brute break its leg. He found his way at last out into the valley, and the valley was a quagmire now of alkali mud. What he had ridden straight up, he must now go around, and at the edges even the horse sucked into the soft and sticky earth, stumbling and sloughing along. A steam ascended from the landscape under the hot sun, and Valero, tired, hungry and worried, was stifled by an autumn day of misery in the worst bad lands he had ever endured.

He kept on going down the valley. He could not see where the cattle had traveled; the tracks of his own and his companions' animals were gone; and as the sun rolled along up into the sky, and down out of it, he found himself arguing as to which was the exact east toward which he was trying to bear now.

His respect for his fellows of the previous day increased; they had come through this land as surely as goats, or mountain sheep, or wild cattle. They knew the way, and he looked at his horse. Perhaps his horse knew the way, too. He would let the animal try, anyhow.

The horse, sure-footed and steady, plodded along for hours. Watching the animal, Valero saw, after a time, that it was a kind of trail, a cattle-path of some kind. It swung toward the north, and then bore west.

He didn't like that at all, but what could he do? He might, at least, have headed straight east—but not straight, either. Every time he tried that inaccessible mountains frowned down upon his attempts, and toward night the horse was still on the plod. Tremaine Valero, because there was a trail, could only let the animal continue its course.

They passed the belt of the storm area, and they came down into a magnificent valley, of which he had never heard. In the sunset he saw before him a herd of cattle—hundreds; perhaps two or three thousand animals—all in motion, and all bound northward.

They were miles distant, and, blessed relief, on their flanks were riders, cowboys herding them on their way.

"It's a big outfit," Valero mused. "I must be away out of the Thirsty Creek range. I bet this old horse come from that outfit—this ranch valley."

#### CHAPTER XXXIV.

SUGAR GUIDES A POSSE.

WHEN Sugar, Janie's man, rode down to meet the Marvelando outfit, Gasper, their leader, holding his rifle ready, met him rather sharply.



"Howdy!" Gasper greeted. "Who are you?"

"Mr. Valero wanted a man to show his calf-branders which way's which," Sugar replied. "Who are you?"

Gaspar twisted in his saddle and changed his tone.

"Oh, all right. We're looking for cattle-rustlers."

"Yo're from the Marvelando ranch?" Sugar continued, his cold eyes surveying the seven of them, his own carbine held rather loosely, like a big pistol, the muzzle up—ready.

"Yes, we be," Gasper retorted angrily, as his men grinned covertly.

"I reckon you be," Sugar nodded thoughtfully. "Anyway, them's Marvelando branded hosses—the snake huids. Well, come on. Valero 'lowed yo'd go up Two-Fork Cañon, 'bout six mile' up in the Blind Cañon."

"Nobody can't get through thataway," Gasper exclaimed testily.

"That's why Miss Frete sent me down," Sugar replied. "I'm nobody atall. I'm jes Sugar; but I sure trapped wolves from down b'low to up above. An', meanwhile, them cattle-rustlers is ridin'—yes, indeed."

"Go on!" Gasper ordered angrily, and Sugar, touching his horse, led the way.

Most of the time he looked straight ahead; only rarely did he turn a little in his saddle and glance covertly at the men who were following him. Sometimes his ears twitched, rather good-humoredly, but quite often the back of his neck turned white along the line of his close-cropped hair.

His mount, the ugly brute, Big Teeth, planked along over the hard earth, and stepped high at sage-brush roots, and when they were going into the so-called Blind Cañon, over rocks and other mountain-foot debris. They rode rapidly, and away up the cañon, when Gasper was looking back at his men, still angry, but with dangerous doubts, one of them rode up to him and whispered:

"He's shore one of her outfit; he and Tarcass, the foreman, was down riding lines, an' Pete here and me seen 'im."

They went on up the cañon, and suddenly

the guide turned and started straight up what seemed the bare wall of rock and caved-down earth. Gasper and his men stopped and stared, but Sugar's horse kept on climbing, the rider not deigning to look back, and then Gasper followed, the others falling in behind.

And then they discovered the marvel of that cañon, always called Blind Cañon, because there was no outlet from it, but which now Sugar went up out of with a certainty that was unmistakable. In the trail he was following, invisible as it seemed, they discovered sure footing and a way over the wall of the pocket.

Years before a horse-thief had been run up into this cañon, and it seemed certain he must be caught, and killed. But the pursuers, as it happened, all from Marvelando ranch in the days of old, before Valero's arrival on the scene, had ridden clear up to the precipice at the head and lost him. None had ever explained what became of the thief and his mount, but now the tradition was proved to be perfectly well founded.

On better ground, two or three miles from the cañon brink, Gasper rode up beside Sugar, and remarked in atonement:

"Yo' shore do know this country."

"Yes, indeed," Sugar replied. "Daddy prospected up and down here, and me, too; I wolfed and trapped all through yeah. I killed a yellow bear oveh theh, when I was jes' a kid—a mean devil."

"Kind of fur back," Gasper said.

"Good trappin', if yo' know how, and where."

"Any pass through that range?"

"Two—that white face theh, Pilot Peak, an' around the north side you can git through by climbin'. Best way is to use south, about thirty mile', and keep bearing north in the gulches. Up top there's three ways down."

"Any good valleys?"

"Not regular valleys, hit's all breaks," Sugar replied.

"No trails—roads?"

"Some game trails; wild cattle, too. No roads."

"How'd the Janie Frete outfit get their supplies in on that big-tired truck?"

"She engaged one of them Eyetalien forty-man bumbin' flyin' machines, an' landed them in Buzzard mesa," Sugar replied imperturbably. Gasper swore under his breath.

Sugar clearly had no intention of forgiving the suspicions with which he had been greeted by the Marvelando foreman. Nevertheless, he was quite civil, and quite sociable even when impertinent questions were not asked.

They rode hard, and Sugar led the way unflinching. When they were at last in the midst of the breaks, he took them to a peak, and there in the late afternoon he looked northward, and for a hundred miles the peaks and ridges, the mesas and the broken lands were spread before them in a panorama, which included, to the eastward, the Waning Glories ridge, the far brim of the Thirsty Creek Valley, and the long line of the Sunrise Range, and the more distant Silver Breaks.

It was a wonderful view, and the posse stood there in silhouette against the south sky, with thousands of square miles of country before them, the sunshine rays slanting down upon the west sides, and the shadows reaching eastward into blue and purple depths. Colors and hues and shades of all imaginable beauties were in that landscape, and a mistiness of the high skies, with questionable clouds beginning to form, gave more wonderful appearances.

"There—there!" one of the men exclaimed suddenly. "There's dust."

Surely there was dust. A sudden rolling up of yellow cloud stood out in the view, miles and miles away, unmistakable and full of significance. They all started up in their saddles, staring and studying that phenomenon. Sugar, looking at it, turned and glanced from face to face of his companions.

"They're headed westward; we can turn them!" Gasper exclaimed, and, glancing at Sugar, found himself looked in the eyes. "Well?"

"Hit's our outfit, I reckon," Sugar replied. "Valero and them was riding in, an' that's about northeast of her ranch. Tar-cass 'll bear north, probably, touchin' up with the White Face ranch-boys."

"Where'll the rustlers likely go, knowing the country?"

Sugar turned in his saddle and looked southwest.

"Course a man cain't tell," he drawled. "Which way does a wounded deer go? But theh's Pilot Butte, and theh's—theh's—"

Sugar blinked and caught his breath. He could not repress the gasp of relief he gave.

"Shore's you're borned!" two or three cried. "Theh's dust, boys; theh's dust!"

Faintly visible, caught just right by the sloping rays of the sun, they saw dust, and an old cow-man, gray in his tawny hair, said:

"That's cattle, boys."

"There they go, then! There's the rustlers," Gasper turned to Sugar. "Now, then, boys—which way?"

Sugar looked dreamily westward, and then turned, as though studying the landscape—as he was; indeed, he was!

"Hit's coming night; that's a long way over. Right through there there's a bad, mean pass, but down there away, about five miles to the south, you come into a valley that goes off kind of so—southwest." Sugar jerked his arms like railway signals, stiffly, illustrating his directions. "Hit's a tol'able road—cattle-trail—and along up that valley. Hit comes right square into the Pilot Peak Valley; you c'n see that kind of a range; at night it 'll be hard riding, but—"

"Well, lead away," Gasper ordered, and Sugar turned and led them.

"We'll head that bunch of cattle," Sugar declared.

The men, exulting at this easy discovery of their quarry, looked north to where they saw faint dust now, the alkali struck by the Frete posse having been passed. Gasper drew a pair of binoculars to look again; he hadn't thought of them before. Through them they saw the dust of the hunters, and even picked up a third dust flight so far away that it was just a tinge, most uncertain and almost invisible.

"Hit mout be the White Face crowd—Sheriff Placard," was suggested, but they could not tell. Northwest, just to the right of the sun, there was a regular fog-bank,



probably thirty or forty miles distant; they couldn't tell; but that was probably wind of the storm that was brewing. They couldn't tell for the glare.

"Well, our jobs are cut out for us," Gasper declared. "We'll head that bunch over at the Pilot Peak Pass, eh, Sugar?"

"Yes, sir; we'd better be moving. They'll drive all night. They got a little valley there. We cross some ranges to-night. Come on!"

He led the way, riding now. The others spread out behind him in single file. He followed a ridge back for a way, turned down into a gulch and climbed the far side almost immediately. For an hour he led them, and their horses were sweating, as was his own big brute, who stamped up over a crumbling bank and scrambled down the slides with terrible abandon. Every once in a while. Sugar would draw rein and wait for the scattered and breathless posse to come up to him.

At sunset they were still on the go. As dusk fell they scrambled along the brink of a precipice, and Sugar said to them:

"This is that little valley, bearing south-west, I told of; up yeah about ten mile we get to bearin' down a hogback into hit. Then up the bottom we got tol'able riding."

In the night, mistily dark with stars, few and faintly visible, he led the way. His followers looked askant to the right, where the mountain rose over their heads, and to the left, where the earth was split wide open, and they could hear dislodged stones and occasional shale rattling and banging into the deeps. Sugar, with joyous little yelps, urged them to follow him.

"Hi-i!" he shouted. "Now we got them break devils headed. Now we got 'em!"

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### DISAPPOINTMENT.

**H**OW long they rode none knew. But they came down a hogback, on their way down into the valley levels, and as they entered the grim shadow of the cañon, their pace slowed down. Sugar yelled for them to hurry, and they heard him urging his horse like a wild man, and

they could see the fire fly under his iron shoes.

Gasper and the others were falling behind, when there was a sudden scream ahead, and they heard, as it seemed, half the mountainside begin to rumble and crash, like an avalanche. In this, the guide's horse galloped, and then there was a lumping and a fall. This was followed by quiet.

"Hello!" a voice called, apparently from far below.

"All right, Sugar?" Gasper hailed.

"Yas, suh! I'm all right—but my fool hoss—he done broke his neck!"

"Hell!" several voices cried, simultaneously.

"Yo' go on!" Sugar cried. "Yo' cain't lose your way now—straight along the hogback, an' up the valley. Right unde Pilot Peak you'll find a valley out'n the north. Look fo' cattle tracks, or wait for them—they got to come through the—I know!"

"All right!" Gasper replied. "What 'll you do?"

"Take off my saddle an' take a hell of a walk," Sugar replied, and the ranch foreman commented:

"Serves you right, riding like that. Come on, boys!"

The others of the posse went on. Gasper led the way, his horse walking, and even then loosening stones that rolled down invisible slopes. The posse made a lot of noise, but when after a time they got down into the valley, they found it as Sugar had said, pretty good riding.

They could trot in places, and might have galloped, but their horses were tired, and it was night—a memorable night, with a thunder-storm flaring away to the northward, and even some clouds dark over their heads, but they were at the edge of the disturbance and not involved in it.

Occasionally, however, they stopped to listen, to make sure that they were not in the washway of a cloudburst wave. A cloudburst miles distant might pour a huge flood into their valley, and if it didn't engulf them, might drive them high up the sloping sides of their course, to escape its rush. Moonshine, through the jagged clouds, helped them see more plainly at

frequent intervals, and when the storm had subsided, the distant thunders rolled away, and the clouds evaporated—a wonderful cañon night was upon them.

Pilot Peak was ahead of them, silvery when they could see it past the cañon walls. Most of the time, till the moon was away up, they were in the shadows, urging their horses along, and planning among themselves the general features of their attack upon the outlaws as they drove the herd away.

They had ridden for hours when suddenly they heard a lowing of cattle, which were bedded down. They stopped, and listened—cattle were up the valley! They held hurried, whispered consultation, and then decided that it would be best to wait for day before making the attack.

They waited for the first streaks of dawn, and then, having hobbled their horses, they scurried up to position half a mile distant.

There, sure enough, were cattle—three-score head, at the most. The posse lurked around, trying to discover the thieves, saw that the cattle were mostly Marvelando brand, and that they had wandered up the very cañon which they had followed. This caused them to scurry back, get their horses and go galloping on up the valley, for it wasn't a stolen herd.

Their valley petered out, with gulches coming in from various directions. When, after midday, they came to the foot of Pilot Peak, there was no cañon to the north, nor any valley—just a tumble of rocks along a steep mountainside.

Accordingly, having climbed to a peak to survey the country, Gasper and another man looked northward, upon a dustless landscape. The rain had changed the color of the whole Waning Glory Breaks as far as they could see; and, naturally, no bandit gang driving cattle in the valleys need fear betrayal by the alkali in the air.

"Where does that valley come in here?" Gasper swore. "I ought to have brought Sugar along—"

He sent two men back to drive the strayed cattle back down the cañon, and out into the Thirsty Creek Valley range. That much good had come from the trip, for the animals might easily have been

cooped up there, undiscovered during the fall round-up, half of them perishing in the winter, and the other half joining the wild cattle and mavericks of the breaks. He had, of course, to work northward, trusting to luck to locate the valley Sugar had told about, and heading the desperadoes whose dust he had seen the previous night.

Luck was with him, of a kind. He found a valley, and in the valley were thirty head of cattle. They were all alone, all but three were branded by the Marvelando two-headed serpent. The others, Y-R in the Bits, had come across an alkali flat to reach this place where he had found them.

From the location and the direction, Gasper and his fellows could come to but one conclusion—these were the stray animals that had led them to the foot of Pilot Peak, which had cost Sugar his horse, and perhaps enabled the cattle rustlers far to the north to avoid the prowess of the Marvelando boys.

"If we'd found 'em, we'd given 'em hell!" Gasper mused. "Too bad!"

They started back with the cows, picking up several others as they sought a better route back to the transecting valley where the sixty animals were. On the way, they had chances to talk the matter over, in scattered intervals of conversation. That night Gasper and his remaining men sat by a fire for a minute, eating a cold snack and the haunch of a deer one of them had killed.

"Gasper," one said, "how'd these here cows get way back here?"

"I've be'n wondering," the foreman admitted.

"They got throwed back, that's my ijee!" another exclaimed.

"What makes you think that?" Gasper inquired, interested.

"That ole spot-face steer, there, the lame one, ain't never come back in here without no he'p. An' jes' las' week, I seen 'm, when we's lookin' around' waitin' for Valero to say begin the beef round-up. I'd know him! He got picked up, somehow, an' druv back. That's my ijee!"

"That's so!" the others chimed in. "These here had he'p, comin' back up into these damn breaks!"



No doubt of it! The Marvelando animals had been monkeyed with and the herds were thinned out—now that they thought about it. Something had been to pay over the Thirsty Creek Valley ranges—right under their eyes and they hadn't seen it.

They brought their little bunch of cattle into the valley the following morning, and overtook the larger bunch toward night. Right there, too, they saw where they had come down the hogback into the cañon, and they looked up the mountainside, to see where Sugar had met with his accident.

It was only a little way up there, and two of the boys rode to see—but they found no dead horse. They did find where the animal had plowed down the sliding scale, however—they found where the animal had come down on its belly, and lay there, on a kind of ledge.

They told Gasper about it.

"He rode away on the hoss, back up the hill—"

"What!" Gasper cried. "He did!"

"Hit were only jes' stunted, Big Teeth was—that anemile, you couldn't kill him—an' Sugar probably lamed him, an' rode back home."

"He'd ought to had hisn's own neck broke," Gasper declared angrily, and resumed the drive homeward bound.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### RIDING FOR JANIE.

**W**HEN the Marvelando outfit, led by Gasper, had driven on, leaving him to get away as best he could, Sugar whispered in Big Teeth's ear, and touched him under his jowls. Big Teeth struggled up and shook himself a little.

Sugar had taught him many things, and one of them was to ride down in the night on any impossible grade and stop short, anywhere, and lie still at the word. It was a valuable accomplishment, and Sugar was now tired of his companions.

"Riders?" he said to himself. "Cowmen—hell! They're scared of their precious laigs."

But not Sugar; they could not say that he tried to spare himself, or save his horse,

when he was on the ride. As soon as they were clear of him, he returned up the slide, rode back on their trail a few hundred yards, and then turned northward in the black and stormful night.

The big brute he rode was after his own wild heart, and unafraid in the dark desolation. There was living in the air that night, and Sugar made haste into the places where the Frete outfit was riding, and beyond where Sheriff Placard and his numerous posse were also on the hike.

Sugar had no more time to waste on the Marvelando outfit, which was economical in its wages and rather more so in its general character—one or two good men, and the others men who couldn't always do even what they were told to do. Every man on Janie's ranch carried a rawhide lariat, and those lariats were dressed and had had the hide-stretch taken out of them; but only two of the Marvelando men had rawhide ropes—and those ropes were old and frayed, badly worn. Not a rope there but might break and let a maddened cow through into the other man in a stretch-out.

Sugar gave them only a curse for a thought, but there was business for him ahead—work that he and the other boys had all talked over, with all their training and experience to guide them, down there in Janie's bunk-house, when they might have been sleeping and paying no attention to their employer's interests—beyond what they did under the orders of the foreman.

But Janie Frete had engaged not only their wage honesty; she had, somehow—they could not tell exactly how—she had won more than that; she had laid upon them all her gage of trust and not one but had responded. In the heart of every one there was a picture of Janie's quiet and gentle face, with her eyes that were unflinching in their courage—the girl who had been fighting her way up out of none knew what depths of misfortune, but they all knew that she was coming back from the doors of the famous Canadian penitentiary.

Tarcass had ridden into their camp and told them of his own experience with the young woman; how she had fed him out there on the edge of the Salt Lake Desert, when he was desperate, and when all the

country was alarmed and on the watch for him—because he had first knocked Asra Clement down with his fists, and then as the furious and utterly savage ranchman had fired his revolver, the hired man's bullets had killed him.

"It were self-defense, boys!" the newcomer declared. "Now I'm on the hike—but I got a job, and hit's way out in the lonesome. You know—Trenal's old ranch. I 'lowed, likely, some of you boys, what's friends of mine, and all of you boys—I don't know you all—mout come in with me.

"She's a damned nice girl, clean, and she's a tenderfoot. But level, and wages is standard, and—there 'll be grub—I talked to her about it—grub such as likely you ain't had. She'd hire a girl, or two, if there was any, to cook—"

"There's an Injun outfit, schooner wagon, up yonder," Dishpan had said. "Screaming Eagle—"

"Send 'em in," Janie's foreman had suggested.

Sugar had asked if it mightn't be some trick, but Snowflake thought not. They decided to ride in and give it a try. They had found Janie Frete just exactly as Tarcass had described her. Only Janie was more of something than they had anticipated.

Expecting a few weeks or months of good ranch life, with just ordinary up-building work, going out to bring in bought cattle, and perhaps building fences, they had soon found, in their bunk-room councils, that their employer was in utmost need of their greatest efforts, and they had worked harder and more faithfully, and with longer sustained effort than they had toiled in—they couldn't remember when.

Sugar's heart was singing as he rode; to him had come a hint of his own redemption—Janie Frete a jailbird? And Janie fighting her way up? Then Sugar could make good, too, for he had on himself a dark stain.

That was what he was thinking, riding northward there, leaving with contemptuous scorn those other riders whose mounts had stumbled all over the trail that his own noble Big Teeth had pounded with huge

hoofs, throwing the slide rock and digging up the sage roots.

"I'll git where the music is a tunin' up," Sugar laughed to himself. "I'll ride with Janie's outfit—that's what I'll do—"

He rode into the rain-storm full tilt, and was drenched by the downpour, but with his eyes returning glare for glare to the lightning, he hurried on—and when he thought of it, he tipped up his hat and caught himself a drink, while Big Teeth slobbered joyfully in the new creek that was pouring down a gulch, growing bigger and liable, at any minute, to rear up into a wave like the run from a broken dam.

Sugar was on the ride that night! He galloped, and sometimes he sang snatches of old cowboy songs, old trapper songs, and old love songs—but he clinched his teeth upon whatever jingle he was shouting when he came to a place where he must turn to right or left—and a flash of lightning, and later the glow of the moon, revealed to him his true course.

It was wonderful riding; wonderful night riding, but it was true that Sugar knew those breaks, and it was true that he had trapped through them—had trapped wolves at the mouths of their dens, and had killed bears in their caverns, refusing to pay the price of such recklessness, since he was fearless, and his was the kind of courage that did not know he should give reckoning and count the cost, to see if it would yield a profit.

Black night, full of lightning, and night silvered and made strange with clear moonshine—Sugar knew it under one aspect, as under another. He could leave the details of footholds to Big Teeth, for this night he was riding in the sky, and his head in the clouds, or among the stars.

"I'm a riding, Janie—riding fo' yo' herds!" he laughed gleefully. "Ho Law! See me prance along!"

He took off his hat and waved it high and low, for very exuberance, and Big Teeth jumped a wash fifteen feet wide—and Sugar didn't know it till he happened to glance down, and saw the foaming of a run-off from a mesa.

"Huh!" he said, "that wash 's moved up half a mile sinct I was heah before!"



On the far side of the mesa he plunged down over the brink, and after he was down, he happened to think that perhaps he might have found that a slip had taken away the old slope, and left it a perpendicular cliff half a hundred feet high. But he, scrambling down the slide, wet and loose as it was, with old Big Teeth sitting back on his haunches and himself taking strides like a jackrabbit, he laughed; and was in the saddle when near the bottom Big Teeth found his hoofs again, and strained at the bridle reins.

Dawn found Sugar still scrambling along, short-cutting, taking any slope up or down, swimming bank-full torrents between howling cascades, and lifting his horse out by the bits on the far side. And in the sunshine, leaving his horse under the ridge, he climbed to the top, and looking through a cedar tree, Sugar looked down upon a great valley, where cattle were grazing, but where almost all of a great herd were beginning to draw ahead in the lines of riders who had started them on their way.

Sugar watched the process a little while, and then went back to his horse and continued northward, parallel to the course of the cattle, which were miles distant. He found where a lone rider had come along, after the storm, and followed the track for a while, till he saw that it was Valero, on a horse which Sugar knew well, having put it into Janie's alfalfa.

Valero was standing beside the animal, and loosely holding the bridle reins. Sugar, grinning, whistled low and faintly. At the sound, Valero's horse turned and, jerking loose, threw up its head and the bridle reins fell across the saddle—they were short and buckled, for that was all Valero knew about the fine points of riding. He hadn't even thought about those reins not being long and loose.

The horse raced away, and Valero, in frantic fear, started to run after it, dropping his rifle. But the animal circled over a ridge, and when Valero reached the top the horse was nowhere in sight—neither was Sugar, nor Big Teeth. Nor did Valero at once surmise that the vengeance of the Prete ranch outfit on him for his insults to Janie was rather complete.

Sugar had been more impatient than the others; they had rather expected Valero to permit his horse to lead the way, which would be back to the animal's old pasture ground, but Sugar, seeing the animal there, and recognizing Valero's predicament, as well as the unusual circumstances of that morning in the great valley, simply called the horse and hurried on about the bigger business he had at hand rather than bother to mix up with so inconsequential a man as Valero.

Sugar simply went over into a little valley, followed it a mile, and slipped over into another, working down toward the broad levels, approaching the moving herd on a long slanting diagonal. All the while he rode, he looked anxiously and searchingly toward the east where at any moment there might ride into sight horsemen with their weapons hanging loose. Sheriff Placard would be coming, if he had any kind of luck—with him would be Bleak Grisp, and the White Face cattle boys, and the posse that had come in with the sheriff.

"There 'll be fun if they show up," Sugar mused. "Yes, indeed! I'll sort of ride out-riding—I expect I'd better! But likely Placard won't get up high enough to see them—there's no dust. Then what 'll I do—if them rustler hunters don't show up—Sho-land!"

Sugar was riding on his lonely, now, his own ideas prevailing while he drew up abreast of the herd which the men in the valley had all moving and were pressing northward to where the valley narrowed and where there was a doorway in the mountains that looked through upon dim blue distance. They were heading for that gap, miles away, and Sugar measured the distance with his eyes, while he looked to the right and watched the crests of the ridges and knobs and mountains that were the Waning Glory Breaks. He was amused to think of the chance discovery of Valero, and the recovery of the trained horse that had been given the money-mad rancher.

"He's shore got a nice walk before an' behind 'im," Sugar mused. "I expect he'd better be startin'."

He stopped, suddenly. Away over to the northeast, in the dry country beyond the

great stain of the rain-storm of the previous night, he saw dust; watching it a few minutes he turned and looked down at the herd of cattle, which was now in motion, hard-driven, and the herd lumbered along the way the individual animals do on the gallop.

"They 'll never make it!" Sugar mused. "Janie 'll never get her share—never in Gawd's world! But trying don't do no harm."

Thus the mask fell from Sugar and his fellows.

The dust was moving fast, and Sugar knew the herd had been seen—that Sheriff Placard was riding with his posse, or those who had been able to keep through the grueling drive of the previous days. Instead of one tuft of dust, there were now several, all in a long line, as the posse stretched out, the better horses getting into the lead—or perhaps the more eager drivers.

Sugar didn't make himself prominent in the landscape, but worked along at the lower level of the cedar tree growth, fingering his carbine and looking toward the far south at intervals, and ever keeping track of his own immediate horizon—like a hunter looking for deer that may be skulking close by, or to the distant peaks where a mountain sheep may be silhouetted against the sky.

A wild man, this Sugar, riding to lead the Marvelando outfit away up to lose them in the breaks, he was now a still-hunter, keeping low and foreseeing every move. On him, this day, there was falling a burden that he knew might crush him. But the boys would need him—Snowflake, and Burke, and the rest of them.

They didn't know, yet, that he was there. Only he knew it; but already they had seen that dust—and they were drawing together as they rode along the flanks of the herd, passing the word along above the roar of the hoofs.

Sugar could readily recognize them by their style and place in the drive—there was Snowflake, moving up the near side, and getting on the point where the coming sheriff's posse would strike them.

"Good old boy!" Sugar whispered to

himself. "He'll be thar when them—them—"

Words failed the youth, who wasn't much of a talker anyhow. He cocked and uncocked his rifle with thumb-and-finger flashes as quick as a pianist's or typewriter's stroke upon the key. He rode toward the coming posse, and kept low, raising no dust of his own in the stony land where he happened to be.

He had much riding still to do, as the sheriff had, but if they were coming miles Sugar had the short-cut on them. He rode to head them—the lone desperado, now, flanking the enemy in one desperate maneuver to bring the law to a halt, and still enable the drivers of the herd to get away with the cattle.

"They b'long with the ranch!" Sugar muttered softly. "They go with the ranch. This 'll make a stink—an' likely—sure, it 'll all come out—what those White Face an' Marvelando scoundrels is up to! Janie's on the level, bein' beat out—but—likely—come's this hell, an' there'll be a chanst for her. That's—what the old boy said! Ah—Snowflake!"

To Sugar the spectacle of the driven herd was beautiful; they were running it, those boys, in a last, desperate attempt to get up into that gap in the mountains ahead of them, where the animals could go on, while they all stopped the rush of the sheriff and his posse. Any but wild men must have realized how absolutely hopeless their drive was—but their work was always hopeless, from any view but that of their own madness.

Hadn't they been doing the impossible for weeks? Hadn't they been stripping all the Thirsty Creek Range, and wasn't every animal in that great and beautiful herd a cut-out from under the eyes and ears of the Marvelando and White Face outfits?

Not till Bleak Grisp came in from Utah and began to look around had any one seen, or felt a suspicion. But Bleak Grisp was an old-time cattleman, harking down from the days when open range was the habit, and when a fence was the sign of some pop-eyed little homesteader, or a nester—from the days when horsemen couldn't ride up and down, taking their pick of herds and



running them off night or day, as they pleased.

Sugar swore under his breath at the stupidity while he rejoiced in it.

"Damn that Bleak Grispi!" Sugar muttered. "I wonder is he riding to-day?"

He hoped so—that was his fervent wish, though hardly a prayer. If Sugar had thought prayer would help matters any, he would have prayed—he would have said or done anything that promised to help in this dire emergency of the gang, of the Waning Glory Break boys whose outlawry was in keeping and in kind with that of the wild horses who would acknowledge no master nor travel with any brand; whose backs knew no blanket nor saddle, much less their mouths knew bits!

Sugar's work was cut out for him, and he rode to perform that feat. He cut in along a low, unbroken ridge and when he saw Snowflake, out on the point of the herd, suddenly ride in a short circle, he knew that his own presence had been seen by their leader, and Sugar's maneuver was understood.

Burke, away back in the rear of the herd, lashing the laggard animals with his rawhide rope, also rode in a short circle, so that it was plain the boys all knew Sugar was there, and were witness to the youth's madness—his desperadoism, or utter abandon in the face of opposition.

It was Sugar's day that—for hours he was on his way up to turn the sheriff and his posse, check it, stop it—and when Sugar had cut in ahead of the coming men, he had a mile or more to spare, at a place which was wholly in keeping with his hope and desire.

Sheriff Placard's men, led by the indignant Bleak Grispi, thundered down a shallow valley, which led between two close ridges to the very meat-platter brim of the beef-covered plain.

Bleak, with that great herd before him, leaned upon his horse's neck, and urged the brute to go into them—and divining the character of the men riding up at the near point, Bleak was swinging to strike

those two, who were now only three or four miles distant.

He rode down the gully into the sights of the fish-eyed youth who stood calmly at his ambush waiting the exact moment to open the battle for that herd. Sugar had the right moment at last, and the quick puff of his rifle was followed by Bleak huddling up where he rode, swaying and struggling desperately against the irresistible bullet that had torn through his body.

His soul fought against leaving that rough and scared body—but in vain, and the two separated, the body falling flexed to the earth, and the soul going to whatever such a soul might have waiting for him. The freed horse swerved and half-circled, startled and alarmed at the sudden release.

Four miles before they had expected to do so, and half an hour ahead of time, Sheriff Placard and his men had come upon the desperadoes, struck their bullets at a disadvantage and quite unprepared at that particular moment for the beginning of the battle, which had seemed far away.

Unseen in his little cedar-tree ambush, with clear sway before him, Sugar established himself that hour in the annals of desperadoism. He caught another man in the body when he turned to the followers of Bleak. He broke the neck of Sheriff Placard's horse, and regretted it wasn't the man's.

He stepped clear to get a better shot at a fourth man—and seeing what was at hand, the long-drawn-out line of posse-men broke for cover on both sides of the little valley and dropping behind sage or cedar, water-wash or stone, grabbed nervously at their rifle hammers to shoot, and while they stopped there, the cattle herd went past the foot of that valley and continued, in a rising cloud of dust—out of the rain spot—in desperate and unimaginable errand of haste toward the valley outlet.

"What in hell do they expect to do?" an old, dim-eyed posse cowboy asked himself, as he tried to get a good aim at the man who had stopped them.

**TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK.** Don't forget this magazine is issued weekly, and that you will get the conclusion of this story without waiting a month.

# An Automatic Horse Trade by Strickland Gillilan



THE mumbling Mexican—or grumbling greaser if you don't like the other term and insist on an alliteration—Pasquale Madero, dismounted, threw the long reins of his glorious golden sorrel mare over her head and eased the double cinch. Then he ran his hand under the high-cantled saddle itself. The sensitive mare flinched and jumped, throwing her beautiful head up from the sparse grass she had been hungrily munching, putting back her tiny ears as she did so.

Then using some genuine and heartfelt Mexican cuss words interlarded with equally sincere tenderness, Pasquale removed the saddle entirely and stood looking eloquently at some splendid specimens of saddle-gall. For not only did he love Chiquita far more than he loved his own brother—if you had known both Chiquita and the brother, you should not have been surprised at Pasquale's preference—yet he also very much wanted to keep that mare on the lope for the next few hours. Whereas it would be whole days, with the best of luck, before she could travel under his weight again.

Pasquale was bound for the Esanado ranch to look at some promising two-year-old white-faced stock that his business and social rival Fernando Hueco was also anxious to inspect and probably purchase; and they were a good prospective buy.

Young Otie Lenox lived in the village of Cactus Mesa, at whose straggling outskirts

Pasquale's involuntary hesitation had occurred—Otie would have called it his "back stop," being something of an almost-criminal joker. Otie had witnessed the episode from a safe and unobserved distance.

Though not observed himself by the concentrated and cursing Pasquale, yet Otie camouflaged his interest, through pure horse-trading instinct. Otie had seen Pasquale ride through the village once or twice before, and each time the sight of the wonderful mare the swart rider bestrode had made Otie drool like a starving Christian martyr chained in the presence of a Lucullan feast.

For Otie was a horse-trader by birth and heredity and choice and everything else. He was a horse-worshiper on both sides of the family. His mother was a Kentuckian from the blue grass region, while his father was a hill-billy from the part of old Virginia where horse-flesh is too sacred to treat it as they do in Paris.

It was Otie's grandfather in Kentucky who had once been seen to ride away early in the morning on a plug that had clergyman's knee and spavin and ring-bone and heaves and was an inveterate cribber, and ride back again at eventide mounted on a knee-acting filly, driving three sheep and a pair of red steers in front of him. When asked if that was all he got for the remnant he had ridden away that morning, the old



swapper had studied a moment and then said:

"Purty nigh. They is some pups that hain't bawn yit, an' I'm to git one of th' he-ones when his eyes gits open."

Otie was now the unproud possessor of a red bay of his own acquisition. But he did not lead said red bay into sight or conversation voluntarily. In fact, he was deeply sensitive on this point. He had been hopelessly gipped when he traded for this gay deceiver.

The rubicund gelding, except as an optical treat, was about as worthless as a pair of binoculars would be to a man permanently blind. Those who were not larger and stronger than Otie, and those who expected ever to want a favor of the young man, never mentioned Thunder in his presence.

As a riding-horse, Thunder was all right except under the saddle or bareback. He knew a great many ways to dislodge a would-be rider. The head that wears a crown sleeps peacefully compared to the uneasiness of the human seat that attempted to caress Thunder's active spinal region for many consecutive minutes.

Failing to dislocate the bifurcate barnacle on his hurricane deck, Thunder would grab the bits between his strong teeth and place as much distance as was convenient between where he then was and himself. If the rider cared for a journey, he was welcome to accompany Thunder. Otherwise, he might do his best to select a landing place among the greasewood, sage and stones beside the trail.

Yes, Thunder was the going-awayest horse known anywhere about the border cattle country. He had plenty of speed, all the wind there was in a rather windy country, and his effort in the distance-grabbing line had met with very flattering success on several occasions when a particularly adhesive rider had mounted him in the hope of making a real saddler out of a splendid physical prospect.

For Thunder was really beautiful. No gainsaying that. His worst enemy—and there were many rival claimants for that title—could not hope to get away with an allegation denying Thunder's personal pulchritude.

His lines—barring an almost infinitesimal dish in the face—were those of the ideal horse; the sort of horse the ambitious little eohippus had dreamed of being some day. His coat glistened like red satin, his mane and tail were long, thick, silky and wavy, looking as if they had just been released from the attentions of the marceling iron.

His head was that of a thoroughbred, his throat-latch thin, his neck naturally arched—no gag-rein necessary there!—his barrel slender almost like that of a well-kept greyhound, and his legs were as straight and clean as if a graduate veterinarian had had him made to specifications.

But except for looks—Kitty, bar the door. Thunder was just naturally as useless as a wooden horse; more so, in fact, for a wooden horse had once been of great historical use, figuring history scarcely less to the said horse's credit than that in which Thunder was destined to figure in Otie's dealings with the stranded Pasquale, owner of Chiquita.

Goodness! Just look how much I've talked about that hoss! Shows my own bringing up, all right!

When Otie had fully savvied the fix Pasquale was in, and had overheard a little of the unsanctified eloquence of which the stranger's system had been ridded, Otie heartlessly chortled. He had a horse-trader's conscience, which is only a more expensive way of saying he had none whatever.

He sauntered carelessly down to the dry arroyo on whose moistureless bank the Mexican was halted, and politely inquired as to the trouble. Though told very curtly, he refused to be offended, and expressed his deep concern. Pasquale glared at him, for he was in no mood to converse or to acknowledge the acceptance of any proffered sympathy.

You can't saddle sympathy and ride it, and a mount was the only thing Pasquale was conscious of needing, except some assurance that he would not have to leave Chiquita behind. Even now Fernando Hueco was probably approaching too near to the Esanado ranch, to cast unholy eyes over the coveted white-face herd.

"Pretty fair mare there, *señor*," bromided Otie.

"*Gorgonzola hispanola Pizarro*," might as well have been what Pasquale said, though it wasn't. I don't interpret it literally—first because I can't and second because I wouldn't. It really meant go-to-hell, in any language you might choose. The tone said that much.

But Otie had no taste for travel in that direction at that moment, so he merely placed the order on file, as it were, and kept on feasting his horse-hungry eyes on the animal before him. After he had stood around silently a while he sauntered toward his home.

Pretty soon he came by again, this time leading Thunder, who pranced along haughtily and stylishly at the end of a rope of rawhide. He was as beautiful as Bucephalus—looked like the very god of horses, which he distinctly was not.

Otie did not look at Pasquale as he went by. He just led Thunder by at a smart trot that he had much ado to keep up with. And Thunder in his stride was something to make a horse-lover, even though he were dead, sit up in his sarcophagus and say:

"Some hoss!"

Pretty soon Otie came back, still paying no attention whatever to the man who had been set on foot by the wayside and by fate.

This time the stranger called out the equivalent of "Hey, there!"

Otie heythered.

"Pretty *bueno caballo*."

"Sure," replied Otie halting with a show of unwillingness. "Some *caballo* you got yourself there. Too bad her back got sore. That 'll never get altogether well again, either."

(Oh, hoss-trader, what a natural and instinctive liar you are!)

"Oh, *sí, sí*! Only one day two, t'ree, she be *buena* like before. I moocha need *caballo*. You let me try your *caballo*? Maybe borry?"

"Sure, sure. You leave your *caballo* along of me."

"No-no-no-no," machine-gunned the Mexican, shaking his head vigorously at the same time as if to add to the negation.

"*Buena*," said Otie. "I lend my *caballo*. You try out my hoss here and see how he saddles."

Otie was as void of guile when he said that, as a healthy egg is full of meat. He knew what would happen, once the Mexican was seated on Thunder's back, if the stranger were as good a rider as Otie believed him to be.

Pasquale rose to the bait. Perhaps he was normally as wily in a horse swap as was his gringo adversary, but just now he was worried about three things—Chiquita's back, Fernando Hueco and the white-face steers—and the triple worry was an ally of the party of the second part. So after a moment's hesitation he tossed his saddle upon Thunder's back and proceeded to cinch it.

Thunder stiffened and swelled. He inhaled as deep a breath as his young and massive lung-capacity would permit without bursting. Having done so, he froze. He held the thought, as it were.

The two straps of the double cinch were tightened as much as the horse's swollen condition would permit, and then Pasquale turned away. Thunder looked back out of the tail of his wicked left eye and relaxed.

Quick as a flash Pasquale, accustomed to the old, old trick that every saddle-horse thinks he invented, turned and had the cinches tighter than fiddle-strings at concert pitch before Thunder had had time to repeat his calisthenics. Otie had Chiquita by the reins before Pasquale leaped for the red horse's roof-garden.

In infinitely less time than it takes to relate it, Thunder swapped ends twice, buck-jumped a dozen times, repeated the same backward and to each side, spiraled, corkscrewed, did a shimmy, a hula-hula, a hootchee-cootchee, sunfished and exhibited all his other parlor tricks.

But he was beneath a real rider. Pasquale did not grab leather, but he held. The quirt was busy about Thunder's ears and flanks, and now and then the latter felt the twinge of a long-tined spur. Gradually it dawned upon Thunder's slow comprehension that he was surmounted by a human porous plaster that was pretty well seasoned with tabasco.



Then the red horse sprung his specialty, that had always served him so well in such cases made and provided. He jerked his handsome head back quickly, mouth wide-spread. The bit dropped squarely between his powerful white teeth, he gripped it like a vise and shook his head.

Then away he went like a ruddy bullet from a seasoned Apache mesquite bow. He went at a speed that would have made a killing on any race-track in the world. Sheepshead Bay, Pimlico—none of the big tracks had ever seen such going. He was doing miles in the well-known nothing flat. For Thunder was a speed miracle—a running fool.

Otie clung to Chiquita's rein and watched the departure. His eyes were distended so that when, a few minutes later, tears gushed from them, the drops fell clear of his toes. Otie's tears were not of sorrow. They were drops of pure joy in the possession of Chiquita, for the mean-minded bay horse had headed straight for the near-by Mexican border, and Otie knew the distance he would go before stopping, and the strong present possibilities of international trouble that would make it difficult for Pasquale to return.

His joy-tears were partly over the permanent disappearance of the beautiful nuisance, partly for the recovery of his face as a horse-trader, and partly for the intrinsic joy of the ownership of Chiquita the magnificent, who was already nuzzling his palm and trying to make friends. For Chiquita had a disposition like that of sweet milk dusted with sugar.

Otie's only prayer was that no mishap might befall horse or rider before a distance of at least fifty miles should have been

placed between them and Cactus Mesa. Knowing the terrible staying powers of the bay he felt his prayer would be answered.

That afternoon late, a rancher from five miles nearer the international row of tombstones loped up to the Lenox hacienda. Seeing Otie currying lovingly the already satiny sides of the lovely mare, whose back had been showing steady improvement from the almost constant lotioning it had received since early morning, the neighbor said:

"Swapped, hey?"

"What makes you think so?" asked Otie cautiously.

"Seen a greaser a ridin' ole Thunder hell fer leather into Carranzy's cactus patch this mawnin' awbout nine o'clock. They-all cert'inly was a burnin' up of th' trail. If they didn't stop nowheres they must be among th' Yaquis by this time."

"Seemed to be a guidin' my little household pet thataway, did he?" Otie queried, still cautiously but with growing faith in the efficacy of righteous prayer.

"No, I cain't say he was a guidin' yo' little pet none. Looked t'other way t' me. That greaser shore wasn't nothin' but a passenger on that run. You-all knows that damn well yo'self."

Otie was silent for a while on the other side of Chiquita, pretending to curry a witch's stirrup out of hair that lay like polished gold. After a while he straightened up once more so that his neighbor could see his perfectly straight face, and remarked:

"Did you ast me something when you fust rode up, Lije?"

"Shore did. I asted you if you-all had swapped hosses."

"I've done swapped hosses," said Otie, dusting the curry-comb.

## THE HOME-COMING

BY EDITH LIVINGSTON SMITH

THE violet dusk creeps to the arms of night,  
The stars throb out the yearnings of the sky;  
The noisy street blinks at the twinkling dome,  
And up my steps—an open door—and home:  
A woman's kiss—a glad, contented sigh—  
Such little things to set the world aright!

# Lucky Bird



by John H. Hamlin

IT was a snappy morning in October with the sun an hour high but radiating no heat as yet. Inside the bunkhouse the atmosphere was like that of an ice cave, and when Tige Northrup sauntered over from the cook house where he had dispatched a generous Sunday breakfast, he thrust his head within the door and shivered.

"Them lazy hounds ain't built a fire—now wouldn't that beat you!" Tige went over to the bench on the sunny side of the bunkhouse and sat down. He attempted to roll a cigarette, but his fingers trembled so with the cold that he cast the "makings" away with disgust.

In a few moments Tige was joined by Dummy Norris and Loop Brown, each in turn peering within the open door of the bunkhouse before resorting to the uncomfortable bench.

"I built the last fire," insinuated Tige testily.

"Some memory you've got," snapped Dummy, also attempting a cigarette but making no headway.

Loop Brown did not interject his usually brilliant comment into the conversation: instead his attention was centered upon a small moving object in the far corner of the big field.

"Say, Loop, if you're that froze you can't talk, why don't you git busy and build the fire. It wouldn't hurt you none," snorted Tige.

"Aw, who wants a fire on a day like

this? Spot that coyote crossin' the field down yonder! Let's slap the saddles on our nags and go after his scalp," suggested Loop.

Tige and Dummy cast uninterested glances in the direction indicated, and they ignored this wild suggestion with silent contempt.

"The guy what gits the scalp ain't ever to build no fire in the bunkhouse again," mused Loop.

Dummy stirred in his seat, shot a glance at Tige, who still said nothing.

"I'll wager my new hackamore agin Dummy's Spanish bit and Tige's rawhide rope—the guy what gits Mr. Coyote's scalp takes the pot besides building no more fires this winter," again Loop egged on his cowboy mates.

It was at this point that Tige Northrup conceived a brilliant idea. Here was a beautiful chance to put one over on Dummy and Loop—to play a dog-in-a-manger trick, but he must tackle it deftly so that neither of his comrades should be suspicious. Tige, ever since he had heard of the dance to be given over at the Gray Dog Ranch, had been down in the depths. He desired, with all his heart, to ask Nora Willis to accompany him to this dance; but unfortunately Nora was not on speaking terms with him. Just why she chose to ignore him, unless it was because he had ridden home with the school ma'am, was a puzzle to Tige. He knew that if Dummy and Loop got wind of this rupture neither would hesitate a mo-



ment to take advantage of his handicap and stampede over to the Willis Ranch with an invitation to the Gray Dog Dance. Hence Tige had not permitted either man out of his sight for the past few days.

"Stakes ain't temptin' enough, Loop," drawled Tige with apparent calm.

"My hackamore's the bulliest best in the valley, and you've been green with envy ever since Dummy flashed that Spanish bit of his—what more do you want," demanded the indignant Loop.

"You gotta hurry, mates—else friend coyote 'll vamoose," said Dummy.

"Hoss ag'in' hoss!" exclaimed Loop, his sporting blood aroused.

"Nothin' doing," objected Dummy, who loved his mule-striped buckskin better than anything else on earth.

"Supposin'," began Tige, "the guy what gits Mister Coyote earns the right to order the other guys around for a week." Tige uttered these words with careless indifference.

It was a wild throw of the dice, but Tige considered it worth a try.

"Ain't he the nut!" ejaculated Dummy.

"Oh, I don't know," said Loop, conjuring up a multitude of insulting commands he could issue to Tige and Dummy. "By Golly, Tige, that's jake with me!" he cried joyously.

"Does the first bet go—the hackamore and riata?" questioned Dummy.

"Yep; and no building of fires in the bunkhouse, too," replied Loop.

"You're on!" agreed Tige.

"Sure Mike!" chimed in Dummy.

"We're off in a bunch!" yelled Loop, jumping to his feet and heading for the corrals.

No ceremony was observed in getting ready for the contest. Each cowboy roped his own horse, saddled and bridled him in record time and swung aboard with never a word, except an occasional jibe directed toward the other fellow's shortcomings.

But there was little advantage gained in the getaway, for the three cowponies buck-jumped out of the corrals within a minute of each other. As they clattered past the ranch house the clanking, clattering cavalcade was joined by a lank-bodied, long-

legged hound of doubtful pedigree and a stocky Airedale.

"Them there dawgs sure hanker after a coyote round-up," sang out Loop, who was a neck in advance of Dummy.

"Yep; wait 'll that hound lamps that measly gray varmit—things 'll begin to hump then," retorted Tige, pressing his knees against his pinto's withers. In three jumps Tige was in the lead—but he had no easy time in keeping it, for the spirit of rivalry now waxed warm and words were not wasted till Dummy shouted:

"Hi, there he goes under that fence."

It was a zigzag rail fence, a relic of pioneer days, treacherous to jump and cumbersome to pull to pieces. Already the dogs had slipped beneath the lowest rail and the coyote was streaking away through the squat sagebrush in the field beyond. Tige never slackened his pace as he neared the fence, but uttered a dare-devil's whoop and lifted his fleet pony into the jump. His take-off was faulty and horse and rider made an awful hole in the fence through which Dummy and Loop dashed with never a halt for inspection of the piled-up pinto and Tige.

"He ain't hurt—just listen to him cuss!" commented Loop, with a quick backward jerk of his head.

"Nothin' can't ever kill off Tige," came the soothing response from Dummy. "Listen to them dogs yowlin'—they're right on the trail of Mr. Coyote. Sorry, Loop, but here's where I leave you."

But Loop's flea-bitten gray refused to be left in the lurch. It kept abreast of Dummy's mule-striped buckskin and the pair of wiry ponies skimmed over the sagebrush flat at a dizzy pace. At the foot of a rock-strewn hillock, over which the coyote and dogs had streaked, the riders parted company. Dummy swerved to the right, Loop took the left-hand course. There was a thick growth of junipers topping the hillock and it was in this thicket that the coyote doubled on his tracks and beat a retreat, with the dogs hard on his heels.

Tige Northrup emitted a screech of exultation as he dashed squarely into the heart of the chase. For a time he had considered that he was well out of the game, but this

unexpected turn of events could not have been more neatly planned for himself. Now he reined his pinto close in the wake of dogs and coyote. When Dummy and Loop made the circuit of the rocky hillock and met at the spot where they had separated, chagrin was stamped upon the faces of both as they saw what had happened.

"He's a lucky bird—that Tige," snarled Dummy.

"Come on—no use givin' up this easy," said Loop hopefully. "Mr. Coyote's still wearing his scalp, ain't he?"

But it seemed a terrific handicap to overcome. Already the coyote was nearing the timber line where a shoulder of the mountain encroached upon the sagebrush field. In the cloud of dust and sand thrown up by the flying feet of coyote, dogs and pinto cowpony, it was difficult to pick out the individuals that were bunched together.

"Doggone it—ain't it fierce what 'll happen now! I never did reckon that fuzz tail of Tige's had a mite of a show," moaned Loop dejectedly.

"Say, Loop, let's slip one over on Tige!" It was Dummy who spoke, suddenly pulling his buckskin to a quivering halt.

"Meanin' what?" Loop turned his pony about and faced his companion.

"There's that there dance over at Gray Dog next Friday night. 'Course Tige's figgerin' on askin' Nora to go. I'll race you over to Nora's and the first one there asks her to go with him. Say, that 'll put a crimp in ol' Tige. Won't he be the sore goat? There ain't no coyote scalp ever gonna make up for losin' his chance to beau Nora to that dance. He's bin countin' on it for a week—he has." Dummy was fair gloating over his scheme.

"Wait 'll I cinch up—my saddle's slip-pin'," said Loop, showing that he had no scruples whatsoever in taking advantage of that "Lucky Bird" Tige.

Nora Willis was the belle of Willow Creek. Her father's ranch snuggled close to the foot hills and was a long mile from where Dummy and Loop planned their cross-country race. It was a hotly-contested affair from the start—the flea-bitten gray and the mule-striped buckskin had

been matched in many a race and it was always nip and tuck. The goal beckoned alluringly to each cowboy and the ponies were not spared in the grilling struggle for supremacy. It was Loop who gained the first advantage when his gray leaped the dry arroyo with a hundred yards of Nora's doorstep and Dummy's buckskin refused the jump and floundered down one side and up the other.

When Dummy threw himself from the saddle, Loop was already addressing Mr. Willis, and Dummy sulkily listened to the conversation.

"Nora? Shucks, now ain't that jest too bad, Loop! She'd be right tickled if you boys 'd busted in here a hour earlier. They was a pesky coyote stole that there biggest turkey of hers last night. Nora she was plum mad about it. She allowed she was gonna git that ornery critter if she had to ride after him all day. Reckon you know what Nora is when she gits her mind sot on a thing." Mr. Willis paused, a slow smile spread over his good-natured features. "Come in, boys, and say howdy to the wife."

"Thanks, Mr. Willis, but I guess we won't bother you folks—we'll just amble along," replied Loop, attempting to conceal his crestfallen spirits.

"That's sure tough on you," grinned Dummy as the pair rode away from the ranch.

"I won hands down, and it's my first chance whenever we sees her," threatened Loop.

"Humph! That don't hold no longer," retorted Dummy. "If I sees her first I asks her."

But Loop failed to come back, much to Dummy's surprise; instead, he pointed to the cattle grazing by the roadside. "Willis's steers is sure fat, ain't they?" said he craftily.

Dummy was immediately suspicious, and well he might be, for his quick eyes swept away from the fat steers and far down the field edging the timber line. He discovered a feminine figure on horseback just disappearing within the shadows of the trees. There was no ceremony in Dummy's flying start, and Loop was only one jump behind



him. The race this time was even more strenuous than the one just finished. Good nature had been flung to the winds and each cowboy was determined that he would win by fair means or foul.

Their fleeing ponies swerved off the faintly marked road and on to the stubble of the fields—on they raced—neck and neck. There was no balking at the arroyo, the gray and buckskin skimmed the wide gulch simultaneously, recovered beautifully and flattened out in dead earnest for the point where Nora had disappeared from view. Neither Dummy nor Loop had a thought for their forsaken mate—the only one of the trio who had held stanchly to the pursuit of the coyote. They had forgotten, even, the base scheme which had prompted them to “slip one over on Tige.” There was just one idea uppermost in the mind of each—to beat the other to Nora’s side—everything else had dwindled to second consideration.

Still neck and neck, the gray and buckskin thundered up to the timber line and made a headlong dive for the opening which had swallowed the feminine figure on horseback. There was a stiff little climb directly ahead of the racing ponies—a ridge to be topped—and the cowboys slowed the killing pace. For a moment only—Loop looking upward, spied Nora silhouetted against the sky line and his spurs raked the gray wickedly, but he was unable to shake the toughened buckskin. The horses gained the crest, nose even with nose.

“Miss Nora!” The greeting issued like a frenzied duet from the lips of Dummy and Loop.

The girl turned her head. It was a finely poised head and her dark eyes flashed brightly as she recognized the cowboys. Her cheeks glowed with the flush of repressed excitement, and barring an alert nod of her head, she gave no further heed to Loop and Dummy, but concentrated her full attention upon something on the yon slope of the ridge.

The cowboys reined their ponies, one on either side of the girl’s jet-black mare.

“I’m askin’ you to go to the dance, Miss Nora?”

“It’s me what’s askin’ you, Miss Nora!”

The invitations telescoped and Nora threw a quick glance from one to the other, then she pointed her riding crop at a downward slant the while she spoke:

“Listen; I’ll go to the dance with the man who fetches me that coyote’s brush!”

The eyes of Dummy and Loop followed the direction of the crop. In the miniature valley below skulked a coyote—even at that distance there was something vaguely familiar about the ugly beast. No sooner had the cowboys given it the once over when the baying of a hound smote their ears. Loop and Dummy hesitated not a second longer—down the hillside they tore amidst an avalanche of flying pine needles and loose dirt. Before they got to the bottom of the hill, a third horseman rounded a clump of young fir trees, his pony’s hoofs pounding the turf at the heels of a lank-bodied hound and a stalky Airedale.

This time there was no handicap—the distance between the pursuers and coyote was equal and Tige, for it was he, let out a wild whoop when he glimpsed his rivals.

It was a spectacular finish to the coyote chase and one which was viewed with tense and breathless interest by the girl on the hill top. Nora’s gasp of amazement was distinctly audible when she beheld this third knight enter the list. Her gauntleted hands were clenched in a tight little grip, her heart throbbed violently when she recognized Tige Northrup. Her first impulse was to shriek aloud and retract the words which had sent Loop and Dummy scuttling down the hill. But Nora was game and after the first panicky moment passed, she sat back in her saddle and was all eyes and ears for the scene below.

There were confusing plays of horsemanship—the coyote, finding himself cornered, dodged back and forth, and the cowponies executed sliding stops, spinning turns and stiff-legged contortions difficult for the eye to follow. Then there was a sudden, straightaway dash for liberty down the open floor of the valley, coyote in the lead, three horsemen in hot pursuit. The coyote made a short run turn and a horseman went hurtling through space when his pony attempted the reverse.

Nora shuddered—she felt a dull sinking of her heart. It was involuntary, therefore it must have been a genuine feeling and it was caused by the realization that the riderless pony was the pinto—Tige's!

And then came a little shriek of understanding and relief.

"He did it on purpose! He wasn't thrown!" Nora's eyes danced joyfully. She could see what had happened now. Tige had made a flying leap for the back-tracking coyote and had landed square atop the turkey-stealing beast!

"Why, he's just wonderful!" breathed Nora, straining her eyes and ears that she might not miss a single incident.

Loop and Dummy had dismounted and closed in on the prostrate Tige. The muffled words of an argument hummed through the air, Dummy made a dive for the coyote, but Tige sprang quickly to his feet.

With a gesture of command he addressed his mates, who were inclined to mutiny, but haltingly obeyed and mounted their ponies and, with scarcely a glance in her direction, rode away from the scene.

A woman's ways are past understanding and Nora sat her horse in a coolly indifferent pose while Tige, the victorious knight, climbed the hill to claim the reward of his lady.

"I didn't know," said Nora icily. "That you were to be in on this—if I had I wouldn't have said what I did to Loop and Dummy."

"W-what was that?" stuttered Tige, more puzzled than ever at his lady's mood.

"Didn't either of them tell you?" demanded Nora.

"Nope; I didn't give 'em a chance. I sent 'em home," said Tige, with just a shade of vainglory in his tones.

"You sent them home! And they went?" exclaimed Nora incredulously.

"Sure; that was one of the bets," explained Tige, which failed to clear up the situation at all so far as Nora was concerned.

So the pair of them sat there for some little time in absolute silence. Nora's curiosity was fast getting the best of her and Tige was at a loss for another word till his eyes fell upon the coyote's brush clenched so firmly in his hand.

"Here, N-Nora, don't you want it?" he blurted out.

"Not unless you want to take me to the dance," said Nora, with a sudden grim decision to live up to her bargain.

"Gee, Nora, I've been fair achin' to ask you all along," sighed Tige fervently.

"Then why don't you?" said Nora, with surprising softness.

## SEA BALLADS

BY GORDON MALHERBE HILLMAN

THE songs of the cities are many.  
 Their voices are gray smoke and dust.  
 It's better to steam with a gale abeam  
 Under the sky's red rust.

The songs of the cities are many.  
 Their voices are raucous and dull.  
 Much better to heed is the turbines' speed  
 As they throb in a tanker's hull.

The songs of the cities are many.  
 Their voices are brazen and cold,  
 But the schooners' sails on the rough gray trails  
 Are ballads that never grow old.



# Long Live Romance!

By Robert Shannon



THEY said in Lenexa that Dave Jordan was shiftless, lazy, peculiar. About all he was good for, they agreed, was "mooning" around.

It was a harsh and intolerant judgment they pronounced on the young man. There was this to be said for his critics, however: Dave himself gave every evidence that he was shiftless and lazy and peculiar. And he did "moon" around; no gainsaying that, but when they condemned him as worthless, they did not use quite the right word.

He was romantic.

Of course, Lenexa, with its hazy perceptions, could not know that. Dave himself was not aware of it. No one can be truly romantic and be conscious of it. It is a condition that is often (yea, always) mistaken for something else.

The fairies had kissed the young man on the brow. The silken rustle of the robes of romance had sounded in his ear. His eyes had caught translucent visions from afar. Sometimes he fairly reeled with the spell of it and then the world was fragrant with hopes to be fulfilled.

When it came five o'clock a thousand girls streamed out of the huge brick prison that was called a candy-factory. They were warm and tired, but because they were

young, for the most part, their high spirits would not be fatigued, and they made a brave showing with their inexpensive gay hats, their trim slippers, and their clever dresses.

Molly Barrett was a drab little spot in the colorful throng. Perhaps she had not as much of the liquor of life in her veins as the others. Or maybe she had more. This is sure: her clothes were a shade cheaper and her gait was a bit slower. Molly didn't belong with that crowd and she never had belonged.

She had been feeling for months that she ought to clear out, so she resolved that June afternoon to get a job somewhere in the country, it didn't matter what the work was. She was utterly tired of the candy-factory, of riding through the Eighth Street tunnel, of her compact little room on the West Side. One day was too much like another in Kansas City and she—

Her slight figure attracted no particular attention as she sat at a corner table in a poor Twelfth Street restaurant, eating her frugal evening meal. No one ever flirted with Molly. She didn't have the flash. As she ate she read through the Help Wanted, Female, column undisturbed.

Thus it happened that she appeared the next day at the Burton House in Lenexa and informed old Clay Burton, with a

tremor in her voice, that she had come to be the waitress he had advertised for. Molly always was apprehensive when applying for work, for she was not hard enough to be entirely self-reliant.

Lenexa, from the moment she alighted from the train, seemed to offer her some sort of peace she had been denied in the city. There were many trees and little houses with old-fashioned houses in the yards. The town was so small that she could look the length of the broad, unpaved Main Street and see the open fields beyond the farther end. Back, at the west, a green wooded hill sloped down to the edge of the town. As she lugged her bulging canvas "telescope" up from the depot, Molly was quite sure she never wanted to go back to the sugary heat of the candy-factory, the stuffy little room on the West Side, or the jangle of Twelfth Street. Before she had ever even seen Dave Jordan she felt that way.

No, she had never waited tables. She had worked in three factories and before that she had been in a laundry—

"Well, it don't take much trainin'," old Burton explained, "and it ain't hard work. If you got any common sense you ought to be able to hold down the job."

"Yes, sir," Molly agreed. It was not for her to dispute with an employer.

"Might as well have it understood here and now that I won't stand for any monkey-shines. No flirtin' with the guests, and you got to keep your eye on them tables all the time. If you're steady and willin' it's a good job and a good home. I pay six dollars a week and you get your room and board."

He stopped and eyed her with quizzical sternness.

"I ain't askin' you nothin' about your past history and your folks. That's your business, but I'm strict."

"Yes, sir." The girl started to add that she had no people, but since he said that he was not asking about them, she remained silent. Although Clay Burton had the usual self-esteem of a country hotel proprietor, and although he was of ponderous bulk and puffy under exertion, he carried her grip up-stairs himself, and turned Molly

over to the other dining-room girl for instruction in the utilitarian art of waiting table.

At six o'clock Molly made her debut and until seven thirty she was flitting from table to table as though she were to the manner born. She had eaten in so many quick-lunch places that she knew, without instruction, what to do. She knew without stopping to figure it out that iced tea should be placed on the right-hand side of the plate, instead of the left. It was a point of honor to keep the water-glasses filled. Guests were entitled to napkins and knives and forks and spoons. No one had to tell her to hustle the dishes from vacated places back to the kitchen. Automatically she knew those things.

"Been watchin' that new girl," Burton confided to Bert Simmons, traveling for a St. Louis shoe house, "and she's got natural talent for waitin' on the trade. Think I got a gem in her. Pure luck—she just walked in here on me."

Simmons laughed. "She's not a good-looker, Clay," he jested. "What became of the blonde you had when I was here last time?"

"Skipped out. I don't think this one is that flighty kind. If she holds up like I think she's goin' to she'll have to leave this place over my dead body."

There seemed little likelihood of Molly skipping out. Lenexa and the Burton House represented freedom to her. She was rid of the pressing problem of stretching her small salary until it covered her bare expenses. There were no more jarring street-car rides, to and from the factory, hanging on a strap both ways. Most of all, there was leisure in the daytime, in the morning and in the afternoon, in the hours between breakfast and dinner and dinner and supper.

Her childhood had been starved and empty and at eighteen she was a bit more of the child than of the woman. Among the adults of Lenexa she made no impression whatever, for it took a discriminating eye to appraise Molly at her full value. The children, however, liked her, and she felt more of the bonds of understanding with them than she did with grown people.



It was from little girls with pig-tails braided down their backs that Molly Barrett first heard any of the fascinating fairy tales of childhood. She had heard vaguely of fairies, but she had heard vastly more of murders and suicides and divorces and catastrophes, and the general run of sensational items that fill the newspapers. In the movies she had encountered hectic love scenarios and boisterous comedies. Such things, she assumed, represented life, and she was not much interested in it, as a general proposition.

But, because hers was a delayed childhood, she was carried away by the charm of the lore of the young. When Beatrice and Prudence and little Martha, with her bobbed head, learned that Molly didn't even know the story of *Cinderella*, they considered it a sacrilege for such a big girl to be so uninformed, and they gathered about her in a circle on the grass under an apple-tree in the back yard of the Burton House and solemnly repeated the whole gripping narrative, from beginning to end.

For days on end, they waited impatiently for her to finish her necessary labor, so they might regale her with further tales from the youthful classics. They vied with childish pride for the honor of instructing their elder, and when they had exhausted their stock, Molly felt some slight obligation to return their favors.

So she began telling them stories of her own composition, hastily concocted jumbles, replete with princes and princesses, of palaces and giants and horrible old witches—characters and conceptions drawn hodgepodge from the stories the children themselves had told her.

For the first time, the character of Molly Barrett began to grow, and because of the nature of the stimulus she had received in her few weeks in Lenexa it developed in a whimsical, fantastical streak that was splashed with moonshine and star-dust.

"She's a queer little thing," Clay Burton observed to the shoe-salesman, who had returned on his regular round of the territory. "Don't seem to have any interest in the fellows at all. Steady as a clock and as trustin' and obedient as a child—more so than some brats I've seen."

There were days when Molly would slip away from the children and wander by herself in the woods on the slope of the hill, and find something intangibly sweet and charming in the deep shadows of the trees. Sometimes she would take off her shoes and stockings and allow her feet to be thrilled by contact with the soft grass. Once, like a boy, she climbed to the top of a tree to watch the sunset.

On the day that Dave Jordan met her in the woods, she was curled up at the foot of a wide-spreading tree, with her head thrown back, drinking in the warbling melody of a bird perched in the topmost branch. At first he thought she was a child, for she appeared so small, a tiny wisp of a girl in white blouse and skirt.

It was one of those days on which Dave was more disinclined to work than usual. There was plenty to do in the little printshop he had inherited from his father, who had been the editor of the *Herald* in the days when Lenexa had a weekly. There were sales bills that needed printing and an order for two thousand letter-heads and envelopes from Sig Newman's general store.

Yes, there were plenty of things Dave might have been doing. He might have been repairing a broken fender on his little second-hand runabout, he might have been whitewashing the fence that ran around his four-room cottage, or he might have been getting out the weekly edition of the *Herald*, if he had not allowed it to expire. But Dave had little mind for such prosaic things. There was a little money in the bank, there was the cottage, and a minimum of industry with the old hand press was sufficient to earn enough for his simple needs.

Because it was warm in town, almost hot, he sought the cool seclusion of the woods, with a pipe and a book of old verse. Do not be mistaken about Dave—he had no keen, appreciative mind for literature. But he did like verse which he liked to read aloud for the music of the words. It didn't matter much to him what it was all about. It set his mind rambling, and he would roam far afield through a maze of adventure and emotion that lifted him up and out of himself and out of Lenexa. He had

often thought vaguely that he might be capable of great things, but that was as far as it ever went.

He was looking for a comfortable spot for an afternoon of day dreaming when he ran across Molly. When she heard his step near her she looked up with a startled glance in her dark eyes.

"Oh!" she exclaimed as she glanced up at the tall, smooth-faced young man. She thought of her bare feet, and in a flash she tucked them under her skirt.

Dave, looking down at her, thought if she was a child she was the most beautiful one he had ever seen.

"Live around here, little girl?" he asked awkwardly, for his heart for some strange reason was beginning to thump in a most disturbing fashion.

"I ain't a little girl," Molly replied. For the first time in her life she spoke with a coquettish air. She gazed up with the smile of a girl-woman into the fine eyes of the young dreamer, and the essence of her sex, deep within her, warned her that this was the man.

It happened that quickly. Cynics will say that love comes from propinquity, from association, from a hundred causes, and they will deny with their last breath that there is such a thing as magic in it all. But there are those who have felt a mystic touch of some great cosmic power and who, in looking back, can affirm that there was an instant when all the forces of their being converged into one great sudden thrill that will endure until the end.

It may come soon, it may come late, and frequently it never comes. And even when it does come, it is beset always with a thousand enemies. There is a hackneyed proverb: "True love never does run smooth." Nor does it. Any one who cares to examine any particular case can confirm the saying. If there be no real barriers, false ones will arise. If necessary, the lovers create their own hurdles—but always there are the hurdles. It seems it cannot be otherwise in the eternal scheme of things.

"I wish you would go away," Molly remarked simply, and if there was anything in the world that Dave Jordan wished above everything else, it was to stay.

"Well, I sure will if you want me to," he said regretfully. "I just happened to be walkin' around and I didn't mean to—"

"Go over behind one of them trees till I put on my shoes and stockings and then you can come back."

It was a command and a promise that sent a flush of color into Dave's lean face.

"Why, certainly, miss—"

He moved away and vanished. Left to herself, Molly drew on her stockings with the greatest deliberation, and she laced her snug brown shoes with thoughtful slowness. When she had finished and the ends of the shoe-strings were carefully tucked in the tops of the shoes, she leaned back against the tree and waited for some minutes, for she realized, instinctively, the value of suspense in an affair of this kind. When she decided that he had waited long enough, she called to him.

"All right, mister. Come on out."

Dave came rather sheepishly, for he had been regretting that he was not more becomingly clad. He felt that he should have a necktie under the soft collar of his shirt, and he damned himself for his shiftlessness that allowed the top button of his shirt to be missing, which produced an open-throated effect. He came, carrying his old straw hat in his hand, and was running his fingers through his hair in a vain effort to restore it to order.

"Wasn't expectin' to meet any ladies," he apologized. "Fact is, I thought I was the only body that ever came out in these woods to loaf around."

"I love 'em," Molly remarked.

"I love 'em, too," said Dave, wondering if he might be bold enough to sit down beside her on the grass. He tried to affect an air of nonchalance by leaning against a tree.

"The woods is beautiful," Molly volunteered.

"Yes," Dave agreed solemnly, "the woods is beautiful. You ought to see 'em in the fall of the year, though."

"You mean after summer's over?"

"You mean in Indian summer," Dave explained. "The whole darn place is all yellor and gold and purple and it sure is handsome then—it sure is."



"I think they're nicer now," protested Molly, half argumentatively, although she had never been in the woods in early October.

Dave hastened to agree.

"Course, they're awful nice now, but I was thinkin' maybe you'd like them better then. Some folks does—and then again, some don't. It's a matter of taste."

Molly was thinking hard, but despite her mental effort she could not recall having seen any one who looked as handsome as the young man before her.

"How old are you, mister?" she asked.

"I'm twenty-five," he replied.

Such maturity pleased her. Soon, no doubt, his hair would be gray at the temples.

"I'm eighteen," she said.

"I always thought," said Dave, trying to speak with impersonal philosophy, "that eighteen was the finest age for a girl. They ain't got much sense then perhaps, but—"

"They ain't got what?" Molly cried.

"I mean, they ain't so darn headstrong, that's all I meant. Take 'em at sixteen and they think they know it all. You take 'em after twenty and they pretty darn near do know it all. But at eighteen—I don't know what it is." He paused in his speech to drop down on the grass, for he was beginning to feel acquainted.

"I'm glad you're eighteen," he said, as he crossed his legs.

"What's my age got to do with you?" Molly demanded.

A panic of bashfulness swept over him and he gulped twice, and fished around in the grass absent-mindedly for a twig to break between his fingers.

"It ain't got nothin,' I guess," he said. "I wasn't aimin' to be forward, nor nothin'—"

Molly tactfully changed the subject.

"I wait tables over to the Burton House and I used to work in a candy-factory in Kansas City," she said in a hasty flow of words. "I come out here to get away from the city and I like it, only old Burton is awfully cranky. He ain't cranky much with me, but he is with Annabelle, the other girl, and she—"

Straightway, Clay Burton took on the character of sinister opposition in the mind of Dave. He became at once a guardian and a keeper who stood menacingly over this strange and charming little creature. The imagination of the woodland *Romeo* began picturing the hotel-keeper as a cruel and despotic parent. Subconsciously, he began weaving the plot of romance. There must be, always, the hurdle.

"I ain't afraid of Clay Burton, nor no man on earth!" he cried with sudden fire. "I'll show him a thing or two when I see him. You wait."

A quick, delicious shudder ran through Molly. The prince was unafraid. Her face was suddenly illuminated with a brightness it had never had before.

"You want to be careful," she warned tenderly.

A hush fell over the woods and they sat silently for a time, neither daring to look into the face of the other. There was confusion and exaltation within them, and a tinge of pain at the thought of the dark figure of Clay Burton who stood between them.

"You want to be careful," Molly repeated with her eyes averted. Came a quick impulse to Dave to take her in his arms and tell her that there was nothing for her to worry about—that everything was all right forever. But, of course, he was utterly incapable, although the thought left him trembling in every nerve.

"I don't know what to say," he told her slowly. "It's more like a dream than anything else to me. I never supposed—well, I just—"

He stopped for a lack of words.

Molly quickly checked the equally incoherent words that were struggling to her lips. The feminine something in her said that the game must be played a while longer—an instinct warned her that she must not disclose too much too soon.

"Well," she said with an affectation of carelessness, "I must be goin'. Mr. Burton 'll be wonderin' where I been all afternoon."

She started rising, and Dave assisted her, his hand closing tightly around her small, round arm.

"I'm glad I run across you," he said haltingly. He desired keenly to ask her when he could see her again, but for a man who was not afraid of Clay Burton or any other man on earth, he stood in awkward cowardice.

Molly shook the wrinkles out of her skirt and straightened her hair. Not knowing what to do or say, Dave remained stupidly silent.

"Good-by," she said, moving away. The prey to weakness had not the courage to walk along with her.

"Good-by," he called in a strained voice.

When she had gone he slumped against a tree and watched after her, catching a glimpse of her white dress now and then as she went farther away, through the trees. After she was quite out of sight he sat down on the grass and lighted his pipe, and began his best dream of all. In the first place it would be dead easy to revive the *Herald*, and the job work of the shop could be built up—big! He could hustle business in the surrounding towns, and take her with him in the car while he was doing it.

A new coat of paint on the cottage would make it gleam like new, and they could have flowers and a garden and—oh, he'd show Clay Burton! Then his heart sank, for another reason. It was foolishness to think that she would look twice at him, Dave Jordan. She from Kansas City, she of the alluring sweetness and delicate beauty. Very likely, she was thinking what a dull, homely, country Jake he was. No doubt if she made any inquiries about him she'd learn how lazy and shiftless he really was. Anybody in town would tell her that Dave Jordan didn't amount to much—he was worthless. His face burned as he thought of his reputation.

Then his jaws tightened. There was only one thing to do, and that was to buckle in and show her and everybody else that he did amount to something. A faint sickness came over him at the magnitude of the task. Probably there was a good-looking man from the city who came down to see her every Sunday, and they probably wrote letters every day. Maybe she was engaged to him, and most likely he had a lot of money. And even if she wasn't and

on top of all that, there was Clay Burton and he knew that the hard-crust old hotel man would never allow it.

As the blue cloud of smoke drifted upward his thoughts turned into pleasanter channels and he strolled down a rose-scented vista into a glorious land of possibilities, redolent with the perfume of exquisite joy.

The spell of his dream was on him for a week, and it was on Molly, too, and like frightened children, they avoided each other. Sometimes when he would pass the Burton House on a make-believe errand he would glimpse her at the tables. Or he would see her on the street and he would turn quickly into a store to avoid a meeting. One night at a band concert in the square he saw her with a group of children and he thought, as he viewed her from afar, that she was the most wonderful and womanly creature ever wrought by the hand of nature.

Molly was undergoing a similar strain. Once when she saw him exchanging a few chance words with another girl she suffered a pang that almost took away her breath. That night she breathed a little prayer that she might appear worthy in the eyes of him, that his love might be big enough to ignore her humble position and her lack of good looks. But in the midst of her prayer she thought of a new way to do her hair.

Being in love began to make her absent-minded at her work, and more than once Clay Burton was shocked to find that his prize waitress was in a slump, and that mishaps at her table were coming regularly. She spilled a glass of ice tea on one guest, forgot the silverware for another and at every meal she mixed up the orders to the cook until that harrassed individual was forced to complain to the proprietor. At the next meal she dropped a tray of dishes in the middle of the dining-room.

In the kindness of his heart, Burton fancied she must be ill and he offered to give her a vacation of a week, on pay, until she recovered her nerves, but she refused his offer.

When he happened to mention to Sam Beasley, in the post-office, that his new



waitress wasn't feeling well these days—merely as a matter of village gossip—he was surprised to find Dave Jordan, who chanced to be present, glaring at him with such malignant hatred that it chilled his blood for a moment.

"Ain't you feelin' well, Dave?" he asked affably, despite his amazement.

The baleful stare directed toward him increased in intense ferocity.

"I ain't got nothin' to say," Dave replied.

"You ain't, hey? Well, what 'n Sam Hill you tryin' to look a hole through me for?" Clay Burton was not resentful—only mystified.

"I ain't got nothin' to say," Dave repeated doggedly.

"I swan, Dave, I don't know what on airth is wrong with you. You look like you want to eat me up, and—"

Unable to control himself any longer, Dave Jordan doubled up his fist quite defiantly and shook it under the unoffending nose of old Burton.

"You leave me and my affairs alone and tend to your own business," he commanded in a voice trembling with passion. "I ain't afraid of you, Clay Burton, nor anybody like you. There ain't never been any black spots on my record in this town and I ain't afraid to look any man straight in the eye."

He strode out of the post-office, and Burton watched him with a stupefied gaze. "I never said a word out of the way to the boy in my life," he said, turning to the startled Sam Beasley. "He must be gone plumb crazy."

"It looks to me," said Beasley, with an air of wisdom, "like he's got somethin' on his mind that's worryin' him."

But neither of the simple souls guessed what it was. They speculated upon the possibilities of sudden insanity, a touch of the sun, that Burton might have insulted him unintentionally—but never once did they get near the real reason for Dave Jordan's strange behavior.

It was not given them to know that a new and overpowering emotion was at work in the young man's being that had upset his sense of perspectives completely; that had

changed quiet Lenexa into a city of romance and intrigue—that he was, for the present, living in a topsy-turvy world of unreality. Theirs was not the insight to know that Dave Jordan, for the time, had become a *Don Quixote*, a victim of hallucination and delusion—that the dreamer was living in his world of dreams. Those things were beyond their ken.

Dave hurried to his print-shop and penned a brief note, a cryptic message that would convey meaning to only one.

It read:

The time has come for action. This afternoon at three o'clock in the same place.

It was without address or signature, but was carefully sealed in an envelope. A small boy, for a dime, delivered it to Molly, whom Dave had described as the pretty little waitress at the Burton House. By some strange chance it reached Molly, instead of Annabelle, who was much better looking.

At the hour of three they met, and each was aglow with excitement.

"I've had it out with Burton," Dave told her. Her eyes grew round with the importance of the statement.

"You—you didn't do anything rash?" she asked nervously.

"Well—not exactly, but things have come to the point where something has got to happen."

"What's got to happen?" It was a fearful little query.

"That," said Dave solemnly, depends on you."

He tried to speak calmly, but his words were electric with supreme meaning for both of them. "There's only one thing to do!"

"Yes—what is it?" Shivers, one after another, were chasing up her spine.

"We got to elope and get married! You got to slip out to-night and we'll drive to Ophelia, and get it all over. Then old Burton, nor nobody in the whole world, can stop us!"

From a moment her head dropped.

"There might be some trouble and I'm going to bring my revolver along," Dave said wildly. "There ain't nothin' in heaven nor hell what can stop me."

The blood pounded in the veins of little Molly Barrett, and her imaginative thoughts tumbled in wild, happy confusion. She knew that she meant more than everything else on earth to one man, to one tall, handsome man—

She slipped into his arms, and when he felt her close against him, the heart of Dave Jordan near broke from its excited pulsations. And he knew that his strong right arm must protect the frail little thing for all of her days.

Together they planned the quivering details. They visualized it and dramatized it with the ardor of playwrights until they knew every step by heart. Oh, they would circumvent the hated Clay Burton—the ogre who held them apart. The realities of the situation never crept into their minds, for they were completely fascinated by their own vivid creation.

And at half past three the following morning, when the white moon was gilding Lenexa and the whole countryside in a soft glow, Dave Jordan stopped his battered roadster in Main Street, a half block below the Burton House, and crept along in the shadows until he was under Molly's window.

She was waiting for him in her white blouse and white skirt, with a blue tam atop her head, ready and waiting. With a tug she lifted her "telescope" to the level of the window and dropped it into the outstretched arms of Dave. Then, in a whisper, he bade her wait until he stole into the back yard and carried to her window a ladder that had been leaning against the barn in the rear.

There was a rasping noise as the ladder grazed the sill—a noise that broke the light slumber of Clay Burton, who was in a front room on the same floor. There came to his ears the muffled sound of voices, and he arose and thrust his head out of a side window just in time to see a man's figure supporting a white form down the swaying ladder.

He gave a hoarse cry of alarm as the pair reached the ground.

Then the man with a mighty swoop lifted the white burden in his arms and fled.

Old Burton, with a quick thought for

his shot-gun, snatched it from its repose in the corner of his room and emptied both barrels with their cannonlike roar through his open window.

With rare activity he dashed down the hall and burst the cheap lock on Molly's door with one lunge of his bulky shoulders. The bed was empty and rumpled, as though she had been rudely carried away in her sleep.

Through the length of the narrow hall he bellowed the alarm.

"Kidnapers!" he cried. "They've kidnaped Molly! Everybody out! Everybody out!"

They came tumbling from their beds, guests and hotel help. Lights were flashing in windows all over Lenexa, for the roar of the shot-gun in the still night had aroused the town. Men donned their clothes in haste and rushed to the street. Women threw shawls around their shoulders and begged their mates not to go out, but the lure was too great. In five minutes the crowd was swirling in front of the Burton House, and old Burton, having garbed himself rather sketchily, was taking charge of the gathering.

"Every man what's got a car and a gun get 'em and be back here in five minutes!" he shouted. "They've kidnaped Molly and gone toward the south in a car. I seen 'em. They're desprit characters, but we'll get 'em, boys, and we'll hang 'em higher 'n a kite. Them what ain't got cars climb in with them what has!"

It was the tocsin, the wild alarm in the night—the call for a man-hunt, the chase that sets the pulse abounding. In the old days it would have been horses and saddles, but in Lenexa and modernity it was the automobile.

Lenexa, like all small towns, had an ample quota of the four-cylinder make that carries most of motoring mankind. Cranks were spun by eager hands and a dozen machines were loaded and off in the pursuit, with a blare of horns and a discharge of firearms into the air—for Lenexa was rising the occasion. At last something exciting had happened in the town.

Up the road, two miles away, where Dave Jordan's roadster was toiling up a grade,



the faint sound of the clamor reached them on the night air.

"They're comin' after us, honey," he breathed softly. "They're a comin' and if they catch us, honey—I'm goin' to stand 'em off as long as I can!"

They made the crest of the hill and the car, striking a level space of smooth road, shot ahead at a reckless clip. Dave was driving without caution and they shot through the crisp air at the speed limit of the motor.

Molly glanced back down the road.

"I don't see 'em, dear," she said. "Do you think they're really comin'?"

"Like a pack of wolves," he replied.

She snuggled closer to him and one small arm crept across his shoulder.

"You're not afraid?"

"Nope."

The tension of her body relaxed and she leaned back in the seat and drew in a deep breath of clean air.

"Then I'm not either," she said happily. "I think it's perfectly grand—all of it."

They sped on mile after mile. Sometimes, when the slope of the road was with them and the cylinders were all hitting with precision, they gained ground. And again, when luck was against them, they lost, but since the pursuers and the pursued were approximately equal in speed and endurance, the distance that separated the elopers from the posse remained, on the average, the same.

There was no time to stop in Ophelia, for the nuptials. Dave was quite sure of that, so they dashed through the county seat town, straight through it and out again into the country and on and on. They went for miles, never daring to slow down.

Gradually the sky began to lighten and there was a faint ray relief from the night. They rounded a curve and the first red arc of the sun sent a flare of red up in the east.

A farmer with his team was driving out of a barn as they passed his place in full flight. He waved a hand to them, in friendly greeting. At the next place a dog barked and from several directions they heard the crowing of roosters.

Molly plucked at the arm nearest her.

"Let's stop," she said. "Let's stop and get something to eat at one of these houses."

Dave slowed the engine a bit, to converse better.

"It's takin' a big risk," he said. "If they ever catch us—"

Molly smiled pleadingly.

"But the ride makes me hungry," she urged. "And anyway I think we've got away from 'em. Please, dear, let's eat."

Dave considered it thoughtfully. From a hill he could view the road behind him for many miles, and there was no sign of the Lenexa squadron.

"All right," he agreed. "Only, it is a little dangerous."

They drew up before a small farmhouse, where a boy and a dog were frolicking in the road. It was entirely possible, the lad assured them, that his mother might be induced to prepare them breakfast, although his father had eaten an hour before and had gone to the field.

They chanced it and found that Mrs. Silas Fennimore was a most agreeable woman, somewhat ample in her proportions and gifted with that wonderful instinct that makes a certain type of woman a mother to all young people.

"Sure will fix you young folks something to eat, if you can put up with bacon and eggs and some wheat cakes," she told them with a friendly smile.

The boy pulled at his mother's sleeve.

"And we got some cherries preserved down in the cellar," he reminded her.

"That's right!" Mrs. Fennimore exclaimed with enthusiasm. "Why, we'll have a right nice breakfast for you in two shakes of a lamb's tail! You just go right on in and set down in the parlor and wait."

And in ten minutes the two runaways were enjoying the first wonderful meal together. And as Dave Jordan ate his way through stack after stack of hot cakes and Molly watched him with proprietary tenderness, a party of men who had seen his car standing in the road, climbed out of their cars and began a wide circling maneuver that girdled the peaceful Fennimore farmhouse.

When Dave was through eating, long

after Molly had finished, Mrs. Fennimore beamed on them and asked, quite casually, if they were brother and sister; knowing full well that they were not.

"Well, not exactly," Dave answered with some hesitation.

Molly laughed modestly, colored a bit, and told the whole truth, and because the farm wife was a woman of infinite understanding and because she, too, many summers ago, had learned that the enchantment of romance is enduring and substantial, she did not laugh. Nor did she think they were foolish.

"I suppose you naturally had to elope," she philosophized.

"Yes, I had to steal her away from everybody," Dave explained with some pride. "I been shot at and I been chased by a mob, but she's mine now—or will be as soon as I can find a preacher."

Molly broke in with a wondrous light in her eyes.

"You got no idea how mean old Burton was." She shot a proud glance at Dave. "He wasn't afraid of him though, nor the whole town. There never was any prince in any of these here fairy stories that come up to him."

Dave could not find it in his heart to disagree with her.

"I'd do it all over again to-morrow mornin' if necessary," he remarked. "You see, Mrs. Fennimore, we ain't got just common, ordinary love. It's somethin' different that most people have—somethin' more wonderful—"

The small boy burst like a cyclone into the farmhouse, his little face pale with fright.

"Ma, they're all around the house!" he cried. "They got guns and they're creepin' up behind the barn and through the orchard and down the road!"

Hearing this unpleasant news, Dave sprang to his feet, his hand clutching a revolver from his hip-pocket.

"You women and children get to the cellar and I'll fight 'em off to the last man!" he said tensely.

A motherly smile of genuine tenderness came to Mrs. Fennimore's face.

"Son," she said quietly, "you hand that

gun over to me, and let me handle this affair. 'There ain't goin' to be any shootin' around here. You've outwitted 'em so far and you've won the girl and they can't stop you now."

She extended her hand.

"Maybe she's right," Molly urged. "After all, we don't want to harm nobody, do we, dear?"

"Not unless it's necessary," Dave admitted, "but if old Burton—"

Mrs. Fennimore took the revolver from him.

"I promise you everything will be all right," she said. "Now you children stay right here and I'll go out and settle with this here mob."

They watched her through the window and saw her beckon the avenging Lenexa men from behind the trees, and the barn, and the roadside. They gathered in a circle around her, and for a time there was a great deal of talk, and an argument seemed to center around Clay Burton, who appeared to be still in control.

At last Mrs. Fennimore detached the hotel man from the others and started with him toward the house. Molly and Dave, as he came closer, caught the expression on his face and they glanced at each other in bewilderment.

He was laughing!

Mrs. Fennimore halted him outside the door.

"Now for heaven's sake," she cautioned, "don't spoil it all by lettin' know it didn't matter at all. Make 'em think they *had* to elope. They'll be a lot happier—always. You got to be stern and forgivin'."

"Stern and forgivin' I'll be, madam," he assured her.

When the returning posse and the captured runaways stopped in Ophelia for the license and while old Burton was telephoning to the Rev. Artemus Briscoe, Molly clutched Dave's arm.

"What's your name?" she asked.

"Dave Jordan. What's yours?"

"Molly Barrett."

"Names don't matter after all," Dave commented. "It's like Shakespeare said—there ain't nothin' in a name."



# Heart to Heart Talks



By the Editor



**W**E have frequently been asked to explain the perennial popularity of the novel of Western life. There is no question about the reader's preference for this type of story. Every editor of a fiction magazine will corroborate this statement. Perhaps the mystery lies just here: stories of this kind fire the imagination, quicken the pulse and stir the heart as more sophisticated or purely romantic stories never can. This is the test of a story, and by this test

## MIDNIGHT OF THE RANGES

BY GEORGE GILBERT

Author of "The Flame Orchid," "They Were Seven," etc.

will be sure to take high rank with the stories of Western life for the year. Gilbert's tale strikes deep into the romance and the realism of those days in the West when men made light of life and law, but had to ride hard and shoot straight. There is a wild horse and a wilder rider, a young Diana of the ranges, and a parcel of rogues. But we do not intend to tell you about the plot. Why take the fine edge off of your pleasure? This is your kind of story, the story you are always asking about. Need we say more to enlist your interest?

**H**AVE we lived before—have we visited this old world in different characters from the one we now possess? Have we played other parts in the drama of the ages than the one we are now playing? Is there anything in the theory of reincarnation?

Those are questions that we leave to abler minds than ours. At any rate, our present job is to print the best fiction we can find for readers of the ALL-STORY WEEKLY. And reincarnation is something that lends itself well to fiction. The author of the novelette in next week's issue—

## THE BLACK DRAGON

BY LESLIE BURTON BLADES

Author of "Next Door to Romance," "Claire," etc.

has made the most of this subject; has woven it into a thrilling and engrossing story of Far Eastern seas and a romance that rings true. Colorful, swift-moving, intense, it is a story that no lover of good fiction would willingly miss.

NEXT week "TEACH: PIRATE DE LUXE" springs a surprise—yes, another one—and the biggest yet. Also, the author, C. J. Cutcliffe Hyne, continues the narrative of the desert isle adven-

tures of Mary Arnccliffe. Don't miss "THE DESERT ISLAND: ANNEXATION."

HERE's an historical story that you will be sure to like—"VIRGINIA DARE," by Warren H. Miller. Perhaps you remember that Virginia Dare was the first child of English parents born in America, and that she disappeared with the other members of the colony sent to Virginia in 1587, by Sir Walter Raleigh. Mr. Miller has woven about these historical facts an explanation of the fate of the lost colony that is of rare romantic charm.

HERE's another fine story from the pen of Raymond Lester—"WHEN MINNIE FELL." When, how and why Minnie fell—well, telling you that is the author's privilege. An excellent bit of yarn-spinning, it is, too.

"TH' RAMBLIN' KID" TRUE TO LIFE  
TO THE EDITOR:

I am not a subscriber to the ALL-STORY WEEKLY, but have been reading it for some time, and certainly enjoy it. Am not much of a writer, but after having read Edwin Irvine Haines's

letter in April 3 **ALL-STORY WEEKLY**, I could keep silent no longer. I think Earl Wayland Bowman knows a great deal of Western life as it is to-day. Mr. Haines says if a cowboy wore chaps on one of the ranches of to-day, he would be hooted out of town on the spot. I have lived in Idaho for thirteen years, and don't think I ever saw a cowboy without chaps on when on a horse. In fact, it looks far stranger to me to see a man on horseback without chaps than with them. The automobile and garages are to be found in any city or village through the West, but the chaps and six-shooter are to be found on the ranches and on the ranges.

Mr. Haines says he has traveled through the West. If so he must have made the trip in a Pullman and never stopped off. One can hardly travel on the train without seeing men in chaps from the car-window. I would like to see Mr. Haines out here dressed in the "velveteens or corduroys" with the cavalry puttees in place of chaps, which he says the modern cowboys wear. I think one day of range life would be all he could endure. I can just hear the remarks he would be obliged to listen to. The only cavalry puttees I have seen are what young ladies wear with riding suits. When Mr. Bowman tells of *Old Heck's* automobile and about his cowboys wearing their chaps he was not overdrawing the picture one bit. On all large ranches or cattle outfits to-day the "boss" has his car, and his cowboys all wear chaps when riding. I should like to have had Mr. Haines out here to-day. A young man came by here hunting for stock. He had his leather chaps, silk handkerchief, and a six-shooter strapped on. Oh, no! chaps are never used any more in the West.

If I am not mistaken, Mr. Bowman is of the West, and knows what he is talking about. Give us more of his writings. They are great. In mentioning the cowboy's outfit I forgot to mention the tapideros which hung from the stirrups.

Box 383, Mount Home, Idaho. Miss X.

### FROM A MONTANA CATTLEMAN

TO THE EDITOR:

A friend of mine, who is a reader of **ALL-STORY WEEKLY** magazine, called my attention to a cowboy story, and said I ought to read it. I refer to "Th' Ramblin' Kid," by Earl Wayland Bowman.

My golly, that's the best range-story I ever read, and I ought to know what a good story of the range is, for I owned a big cattle-ranch in Montana for years, and was in the saddle a good part of the time myself.

I got so excited over that blamed horse race I most forgot myself, and was all ready to bet on the Gold Dust Maverick when I awoke to the fact that was only a story.

That man, Bowman, knows how to write. I'll keep watching this magazine now for the next ten years to see if there are any more stories by

him. Hope he comes across soon with something just as good. Prod him up.

Here's wishing you the very best of success, and if ever you come West, let me know and I'll take you out and treat you to a stack of hot cakes and a cup of coffee. If you had come sooner I might have done better, but that's all they will let us have now.

E. A. BALDWIN.

Olympia, Washington.

### A COWGIRL TELLS OF CHAPS AND SIX GUNS.

TO THE EDITOR:

I have been a reader of the **ALL-STORY WEEKLY** for three years and seldom miss a copy. I enjoy it, every bit, from cover to cover, and sometimes am especially amused with the ideas of other people, found in the Heart to Heart Talks, and sometimes it makes me rather the opposite. For instance, I just read the letter by Edwin Haines, and can say he must be greatly mistaken if he thinks the cowboys of to-day do not wear chaps and six-shooters. I am a cowgirl of the West, bred, born and raised. My father owns one of the largest cattle-ranches on the west coast, and in the mountains. Mr. Haines, on his trips in and through the West, certainly did not visit the largest cattle-ranges at round-up time or he would not say the boys wore corduroys and puttees; they wear overalls, flannel shirts, broad-brimmed hats, chaps and spurs.

Chaps protect their clothing and lower limbs when riding in thick brush. Six-shooters are also carried mostly for use in case of rattlesnakes, but a cowboy must have a gun he can draw quickly and be easily carried. For if an infuriated cow-brute should attack him, what time would he have to unsling a rifle and take aim? For the rifles, when carried, are hung in a scabbard to the side of the saddle, just under the stirrup leather, low enough to come under the bend of the knee; in this way it is carried in comfort to man and horse, if there is no hard riding to be done, in which case the rifle is left home and the six-shooter always carried, rifle or no rifle. And the boys are not arrested, for they never carry them concealed, and a cowboy knows when a six-shooter is to be used.

Nearly every ranch does have an automobile, but they are used for the family and the "boss." I always get my Irish or Spanish roused when any one knocks the West or Western stories, the best of which are found in the **ALL-STORY WEEKLY**. I am always hoping to see that we are to have a sequel to "The Untamed." I could read such stories as Max Brand writes forever, and never tire of them. Each is a breath of the great, free, old West, and he tells the stories admirably, and his descriptions are great.

I enjoy reading the "different" stories. They take one away from the realities of life. But oh! those Western stories such as **ALL-STORY WEEKLY** give us: "The Gold Girl," "Trailin'"—I can't



name them all, but every one is wonderful. The West is waning. That is, the good old free West, where a man's word was law and law was honor. Men do not shoot each other nowadays, and there will be a day when there will be no such thing as a round-up, and cowboys. Then the great, free, wide range will only live in our memories and in our Western stories. So let us not let them dwindle away too soon. The stories of the "red man" have gone, and so will the Western stories some day; but here is hoping it is not while I live, for I love the golden West, its pure air and beautiful ranges, the mountains, the trees and cattle, and most of all the great, free-hearted "old-timer," who is passing from us more rapidly than the cowboy and his cow-pony.

I have written at length, much more than I should, but I am out at camp for a few days, and with each look at the grand old mountains and its wealth of great trees, gently swaying in the wind, I seem to get another thought I wish to express. But with all the good wishes in the world for ALL-STORY WEEKLY's success, and more Western stories,

HELEN COOK.

Weed, California.

## LITTLE HEART-BEATS

Enclosed find twenty-five cents in stamps, for which please send me the ALL-STORY WEEKLY, date of March 7 and 14, 1920. I often wondered why any one should want a sequel to "The Moon Pool" stories. The story ended fine to my notion, leaving Larry and his wife happy. However, hold up Mr. A. Merritt at the point of a gun, if necessary, to write a continuation of Larry's adventures. That was too fine a story to let drop there—one of the finest stories I have ever read. I might say *the* finest, not merely because it was imaginative (those kind appeal to me most), but it was such a thing of weird beauty. It takes a positive genius to describe such difficult scenes and "get it by." Furthermore one of the most beautiful stories I ever read was by the same author, entitled "Three Lines of Old French." Only such a man as Mr. Merritt could get that by. Well, anyway, will close, hoping that the ALL-STORY WEEKLY will live forever and that the editor will never die.

WALLACE HARDING.

Pineville, Pennsylvania, Bush Co.

I have been a reader of ALL-STORY WEEKLY for about eight years and I thought I would let you know how we appreciate your splendid magazine in New Zealand. In your Heart to Heart Talks I have never see a letter from this part of the world. I reckon it is up to me to write. We, that is, myself and three boys, read the ALL-STORY WEEKLY from cover to cover, and are always on the lookout for the next consignment. We usually get four to six numbers at a time as the mails are very irregular, so have a good time when they do arrive. While the war was on, we sent the maga-

zines on to the boys at the front and they were greatly appreciated there. I should be glad to hear from any of your readers who would care to write.

A. ROSENBERG.

Hastings, New Zealand, P. O. Box 185.

I see so many letters published in your magazine of satisfied readers that I want to express my opinions.

I think "The Shadowers" is the most unique and best story you have ever published. E. K. Means, I think, is your best writer.

So many of the readers have some objection to the "different" stories, I think they are wonderful and unique; they give us something to look forward to, and diversion.

"The Gold Girl" was sure a good story; the "Tarzan" story is good; let us have some more "Tarzan" stories. I sure did enjoy "Raspberry Jam." It was a fine detective story.

There are many other good stories that I have enjoyed.

LEE BRANHAM.

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma.

I am writing for the first time to tell you how much the Crawford Boys' Club think of your magazine. We get many different kinds of weeklies, but always the scramble is for the ALL-STORY WEEKLY. We boys seem to like Means, England, Burroughs, Abdullah, Merritt best, but I feel safe in saying that there are others just as well liked. Now for a few kicks. Your novelettes are about as long as some of your short stories, and "Tarzan and the Valley of Luna" was divided up into very, very short instalments; also the end was terrible. Burroughs could have united *Bertha* and *Tarzan*, or have his wife turn up some way. Well, perhaps my youth excuses me for criticizing America's greatest fiction writer. Hoping for some more of England's works—and, say, why don't Burroughs give us some more "Martian" tales?

WILLIAM CRAWFORD.

Chicago, Illinois.

NOTE—If William Crawford will read over the last chapter of "Tarzan and the Valley of Luna," he will see that *Tarzan's* wife *did* "turn up."

I want to say a word or two in favor of the ALL-STORY WEEKLY. I think it a wonderful magazine, interesting from beginning to end. I find all of the stories by Max Brand, Edgar R. Burroughs, David Fox, Lee Thayer, not forgetting Charles V. Stilson, and many others, very good reading. I like the continued stories, because a good story is never too long. The ALL-STORY WEEKLY is a sure cure for the blues. I read a number of magazines, but none seem to satisfy like the good old ALL-STORY WEEKLY. Wishing success to you and yours, I thank you in advance.

GLEASON C. WILDER.

42 Ormond Street, Worcester, Massachusetts.

In reply to Mr. E. I. Haines's comment on stories of Western life in your April 3 issue, would

like to remark that our "statistical" friend is somewhat in error. He mentions that chaps are only worn in the "movies." We invite him to come out here and take a look at Madison Valley. His views of Montana must have been obtained through a train window. "Chaps" are still very much in evidence here. They are not worn as an ornament, but as protection from the weather, *et cetera*. We invite him to a round-up. He will find chaps, big hats, bucking horses, yes, and a good many six-shooters, though we are all peaceful enough. We surely have automobiles and cowboys clothed in chaps and see nothing incongruous in the combination. A Western rancher's wife.

MRS. L. D. PIPER.

Jeffers, Montana.

I have been a constant reader of your magazine for three years. William McLeod Raine and Earl W. Bowman are the best writers that ever put a story in your magazine. "Th' Ramblin' Kid," and "Eastward Ho!" are the best stories that I have ever read. Any one who would say anything about the authors of these stories does not know what good stories are. Everybody I know liked those stories very well, and there are a good many read your magazine. There has not been any about *Min*, *Flo*, and *Vi* published for some time. I wish we would see more of them. I thought the story of "In the Red Brush" was real good.

EUGENE OTTO.

Amsterdam, Ohio.

I have been a reader of the ALL-STORY WEEKLY for three years, and I cannot wait any longer to express my appreciation of the splendid serials and short stories your wonderful magazine contains. At the request of the rest of my family—all readers—I would like to ask you to

please *soon* have a sequel to "Th' Ramblin' Kid." I do not care whether it is correct for a modern ranchman to wear just the sort of clothes he did, or to carry a gun, the tale was good, and the sort that most Eastern people like.

Just now my family and I are deeply interested in "Clung," so much interested, in fact, that I have to bring two copies of the ALL-STORY WEEKLY home each week, so there is not quite such a long wait to continue the favorite story. A word of praise also for "Little Crooked Master." More stories like that soon, please! Of course I understand it would be difficult to please all in the matter of serials, I think them all good, but "Th' Ramblin' Kid" will always be my favorite, and again hoping some day to read a sequel,

Loyally yours,

Staten Island, New York, N. Y. M. RUSSELL.

Enclosed please find fifteen cents in stamps, for which send me the ALL-STORY WEEKLY for March 6, 1920. I am anxious to obtain this issue because I don't want to miss the close of that dandy story, "Th' Ramblin' Kid." We have taken the ALL-STORY WEEKLY for years. I have always enjoyed it. Every week my mother has to hide it from me, in order to get the first whack at it. I'll say it is the best magazine in the country. Some of the stories I have liked best are: "The Unlatched Door," "The Curse of Capistrano," "Eastward Ho!" "Suspense," "The Chase of the Linda Belle," "Comrades in Peril," "On Swan River," "The Tarzan Tales," and the "different" stories. There are hundreds of other stories that I liked very much. I don't care for E. K. Means's stories very much. I have just started "Clung," which I think is going to be fine. With everlasting good luck to the ALL-STORY WEEKLY,

Tucson, Arizona.

MILDRED BEDELL.

THIS 117<sup>th</sup> BOOK ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED SERIALLY IN THE ALL-STORY WEEKLY

## WINGS

BY AHMED ABDULLAH

Author of "A Buccaneer in Spats," "The God of the Invincibly Strong Arms," "Bucking the Tiger," "The Master of the Hour," etc.

THIS is a collection of short stories which were originally published—mostly under our designation of "different"—in the ALL-STORY WEEKLY as follows: "Wings," August 10, 1918; "Disappointment," May 19, 1917; "To Be Accounted For," January 8, 1916; "Tartar" (our title, "Professor Barker Harrison, Tartar"), June 10, 1916; "That Haunting Thing," December 8, 1917; "Silence," April 21, 1917; "Light," May 18, 1918, and "Renunciation," *Minsey*, March, 1910. The other four stories contained in the volume are new to ALL-STORY WEEKLY readers. It would certainly be painting the lily to say anything here in commendation of Captain Abdullah's work, which is far too well known and too universally approved to need any editorial "boosting." The book speaks for itself, and speaks also for the author's amazing versatility. It is seldom that one man can handle with equal facility and equal genius stories dealing variously with stirring adventure, delicate romance, subtle character analysis and human psychology, and—as in the present book—the weird, the bizarre, the psychic.

Published in book form by the James A. McCann Co., New York. Price \$1.90 net.





**"Lady Sealpax"**  
Dainty Athletic  
Underwear for  
Every Woman  
Every Day.

# Sealpax

**A Better Athletic Underwear  
Sold in a Cleaner way**



**"Little Brother  
and Little Sister  
Sealpax"**  
Dad's Comfort for  
Dad's Kids

Cool as a February snowdrift and twice as clean! That's Sealpax—the light and breezy, free and easy Athletic Underwear for men!

It's cut from finest, lightest fabric—it's roomy and comfortable, it's bind-proof and chafe-proof. And, man alive!—it's COOL!

It comes fresh and clean because the Sealpax Envelope protects it—and you. Get Sealpax today—put it on and cool off for the summer. You can get Sealpax at your dealer's. Write for "The Sealpax Family" Booklet.

THE SEALPAX COMPANY  
BALTIMORE, Md.



**IT'S  
COOL**

**IT'S  
CLEAN**



**Big  
Special  
Offer**

**Open a  
Charge  
Account**

Send for  
our big free  
catalog of  
clothing  
and shoes  
for men,  
women and  
children,  
everything  
on small  
monthly  
payments

# Complete Outfit of 3 Wash Suits

**\$1<sup>00</sup>  
Down**

**Six Months to Pay**

These three suits cost you less than 3½ cents a day. Learn to buy the Elmer Richards way as thousands are doing. Anything in clothing and shoes for men, women and children, and you pay in small monthly sums. No charge for credit. Latest styles and strictly dependable qualities only.

**Send Coupon**

Don't be too late for this special bargain. Mail this coupon right now with a \$1.00 P. O. order or a dollar bill. Suits come on approval. Mail the coupon now.

**Elmer Richards Co.**

Dept. A-107 West 35th Street Chicago, Illinois

This complete outfit of three well-made, stylish Boys' Wash Suits sent for only \$1 down if you order at once. Satisfaction guaranteed. Money back instantly if you wish to send the suits back after you see them. A special bargain. Send the coupon NOW!

**Sizes 3 to 8**

**3 Splendid Suits, All Different**

Every mother will appreciate this wonderful offer of three different style wash suits at this bargain price. Boy at the left is wearing blue stripe Tommy Tucker suit with fancy collar, tie, cuffs and belt. Suit on the little fellow in the middle is blue and white Middy style with Sailor collar and bow tie. Suit on the little chap at right end is fashionable Oliver Twist style of tan line with cord tie and detachable knickers. These suits will launder well and give wonderful service. You will be delighted with them.

**Sizes 3 to 8 years. Order by No. S-14. \$1.00 with coupon. \$1.00 monthly. Total price \$6.98.**

**Elmer Richards Co.** Dept. A-107, West 35th Street Chicago, Ill.

Gentlemen — I enclose \$1.00. Send me the 3 Wash Suits Boy's

Outfit No. S-14. Size.....  
If for any reason I wish to return these suits after examination I may do so and every cent I have paid will be returned to me instantly without a question. If I keep them I will pay \$1.00 a month until total price, \$6.98 has been paid.

Name .....

Address .....

State .....



# He Earns \$50 a Week Repairing Autos

**T**HOUSANDS of men everywhere are doing the same. Many are getting more than this. Some are opening garages of their own. Why don't you get into the auto game too? Men in other lines with a little mechanical ability have doubled their earnings after getting into the fascinating field of auto construction and repairing. Ten times the number of men now engaged in the business are needed. Fine, big paying jobs are waiting for men who "know" to fill them. Read below and find out how you can fit yourself to hold one of these big, man's size jobs in your spare time, without going away from home at a cost of only 7c a day.

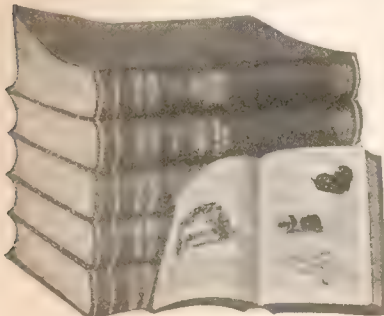
## Learn at Home

No need to pay for an expensive course that will take you away from home. You can learn the auto game at a cost of one-tenth the expense of going away to school. You don't have to serve an apprenticeship either. Use spare time only and keep right on with your present work. This Library of Automobile Engineering and Tractor Information will make an expert out of you and fit you for the biggest kind of job. It is in six thick volumes, with 2600 pages and 2300 pictures, plans, diagrams and blueprints, etc. Every part of every well known car is explained. They teach you everything the best auto schools teach.

Fifteen great auto engineers prepared these money-making books for men like you. You don't have to know a thing about cars to understand them. Every page is written in plain, everyday language and they begin right at the beginning. With every set we give FREE a consulting membership in our society. You can write our engineers any time and get their help on any proposition on which you get stuck.

## FREE Examination!

Mail the coupon for free examination. Don't send any money. We will ship the books (all 6 volumes) by express collect and you can have a whole week to use them as if they were your own. Give them every test you can think of. Take them to your shop. Show them to your friends and ship them back at our expense if you don't want to keep them. If you do keep the books to help you earn more, send us only \$24.80. You can send the balance of the \$24.80 price the same way—\$2.00 each month. Only 7 cents a day. This is your chance to double your earnings—earn two dollars in the same time it takes to get one now. The coupon is your start. MAIL IT TO-DAY.



### Everything About Autos

Automobile Motors; Welding; Motor Construction and Repair; Carburetors and Settings; Valves; Cooling; Lubrication; Fly-Wheeler; Clutch; Transmission; Final Drive; Steering; Frames; Tires; Vulcanizing; Ignition; Starting and Lighting Systems; Shop Kinks; Commercial Garage Design and Equipment; Electric; Storage Batteries; Care and Repair of Motorcycles; Commercial Trucks; Gasoline Tractors.

**128 Blueprints of Electric Wiring Diagrams**

**Don't  
Send  
Money—  
Just  
Mail  
This  
Coupon**

American Technical  
Society :: Chicago

### AMERICAN TECHNICAL SOCIETY Dept. A-16-A, CHICAGO, U. S. A.

Please send me the 6-volume set of Automobile Engineering for 7-day's examination, shipping charges collect. If I decide to buy I will send \$24.80 within 7 days and balance at the rate of \$2.00 a month until \$24.80 has been paid. Then you will send me a receipt showing that the set of books and the Consulting Membership are mine and fully paid for. If I want to get along without the books, I will notify you after 7 days to send for them at your expense.

Name .....

Address .....

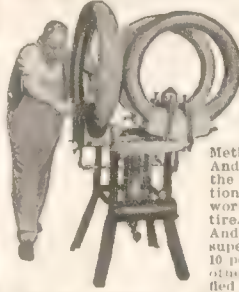
City..... State.....

Reference .....

**Please Fill Out All Lines**

## BIG PROFITS IN VULCANIZING

### Little Capital Needed



Let us help you start in this profitable business and be independent. Many of our graduates make \$3,000 a year and over.

We manufacture the Anderson steam vulcanizer and the Anderson re-treader and teach you the Famous Anderson Method of vulcanizing. With an Anderson you can get the cream of the business regardless of competition because you can guarantee the work to outlast the remainder of the tire. We can show you that the Anderson machine and method does superior work at a cost of less than 10 per cent. of that required for all other vulcanizers. This means satisfied customers and bigger profits.

We have established Anderson vulcanizing schools in thirty states for teaching the Anderson Method. The course requires 5 to 10 days and costs \$45.00. If you buy an Anderson vulcanizer we not only return your \$45.00 but pay you \$5.00 per day expense money while you are learning.

We expect the Anderson vulcanizers to do first class work and expect our students to make good in a business way. Their success is our success. Therefore we do not sell an Anderson vulcanizer to any one who has not received our course of instructions.

It costs you nothing to investigate this wonderful opportunity. Write today for full particulars and address of Anderson school nearest you.

**ANDERSON STEAM VULCANIZER CO.**  
25 Williams Bldg., Indianapolis, U.S.A.

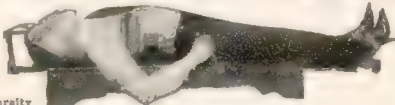
*Print your name to avoid mistakes*

## MAKE BIG MONEY

\$200 to \$600 monthly. New invention guaranteed prevents puncture—adds mileage—smoother riding. Motorists buy on sight. Big future for men wanting business of their own. Agents wanted everywhere. New territory open. Exclusive rights. No experience necessary. Just *Pep*. We show you how to sell. Complete salesman's course furnished free. Great opportunity for men to get into wonderful paying business. Every auto owner is a prospect. Write today. **TIRE IN-SOLE MFG. CO.,** Dept. 9, Findlay, Ohio.



## GET WELL—BE YOUNG—GROW TALL



This University discovery is the most important health invention of the century. It remakes and rejuvenates the Human Body. It produces normal spines. It frees impinged and irritated nerves, extracts contracted muscles, shortens ligaments, eliminates congestion, improves circulation and drainage of the body. It will increase the body's length. **THE PANDICULATOR CO.,** 1518 Prospect Avenue, Cleveland, O.

## Akron Quality Tires

REDUCE TIRE COST 65%



### 5000 Mile Guarantee

Akron Quality Tires are made to meet the increasing demand for reconstructed tires which are indispensable to the maintenance of the auto industry. Their great economy is your personal advantage. To insure properly built and carefully selected goods always order **Akron Quality Tires**. Shipped direct from factory to you.

One tube given with each tire	
30x3.....	\$ 7.50
30x3 1/2.....	8.50
32x3.....	9.70
31x1.....	10.90
32x4.....	11.20
33x1.....	11.50
31x1.....	\$11.85
31x1 1/2.....	13.55
35x4 1/2.....	13.90
36x4 1/2.....	14.50
35x5.....	15.45
37x5.....	16.50

**Reliner Free With Every Tire**  
State whether straight side or clincher desired. Send \$2 deposit for each tire ordered, balance C. O. D. subject to examination. If you send full amount with order, deduct 5 per cent discount.

**AKRON RUBBER CO.**  
Robey and Roosevelt  
Dept. 21 CHICAGO, ILL.



# BECOME A LAWYER



**Study At Home.** Legally trained men win high positions and big success in business and public life. Greater opportunities now than ever. Be a leader. Lawyers earn

**\$3,000 to \$10,000 Annually**

We guide you step by step. You can train at home during spare time. We prepare you for bar examination in any state. Money refunded according to our Guarantee Bond if dissatisfied. Degree of LL.B. conferred. Thousands of successful students enrolled. Low cost, easy terms. Fourteen-volume Law Library free if you enroll now. Get our valuable 120-page "Law Guide" and "Evidence" books free. Send for them—TODAY.

**LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY**  
Dept. 632-LA Chicago



## Delivered to FREE

Your choice of **44 styles, color and sizes** in the famous line of "**RANGER**" bicycles, shown in full color in the big new Free Catalog. We pay all the freight charges from Chicago to your town.

**30 Days Free Trial** bicycle you select, actual riding test in your own town. Don't buy until you get our great new trial offer.

**EASY PAYMENTS** if desired, at a small advance over our regular **Factory-to-Rider** cash prices.

**TIRES** wheels and repair parts for all makes of bicycles at half usual prices. No one else can offer you such values and such terms.

**SEND NO MONEY** but write today for the big new Catalog. It's free.

**MEAD CYCLE COMPANY**  
Dept. D-30, Chicago

Rider Agents Wanted

## DEAFNESS

### THE MEGA-EAR-PHONE

A Comfortable Invisible Ear Device

Non-Irritating - Not Metal - Not Wire - Not Rubber

The Mega-Ear-Phone will restore hearing by taking the place of Perforated, Punctured, Ruptured or destroyed Natural Ear Drums. It permanently relieves Catarrhal Deafness. Stops Head Noises. It is a device giving immediate results. The scientific triumph that helps nature restore hearing, when all other efforts have failed.

The Mega-Ear-Phone will **HELP YOU**. Write for Booklet, describing Causes of Deafness, How and Why the Mega-Ear-Phone restores hearing.

**THE MEGA-EAR-PHONE CO., Inc.**

11 Dept. A, Suite 722 Perry Bldg., 16th & Chestnut Sts., Phila., Pa.

## YARN

DIRECT FROM THE MILL

Send stamp for Free Samples of 50 shades. Superior quality. Great variety of bright colors; also Gray, Brown, Navy, etc. Persian fleece and silk sport mixtures. Lowest prices.



Agents Wanted.

**NORFOLK YARN COMPANY,**  
21 Garden Bldg., Boston 17, Mass.

# THE MUNSEY

NO other standard magazine approaches the Munsey record in putting across successful advertising campaigns single handed. The Munsey has established successful businesses, built factories, made fortunes for advertisers—single handed. The Munsey pays advertisers so richly because Munsey readers have money to spend, ambition to want and initiative to go and get what they want. They go and get The Munsey at the news-stand every month. They go and get any advertised article they want. Have you such an article? Tell the Munsey readers about it and get what you want—results.

**THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY**  
280 BROADWAY, NEW YORK



*Why haven't  
you clipped  
this coupon?*

It takes but a moment—to mark the career of your choice, sign your name, clip out and mail.

Yet that simple act has started more than two million men and women toward success.

In city, town and country all over the world men are living contented lives in happy, prosperous homes—because they clipped this coupon.

In every line of business and industry, in shops, stores, offices, factories, in mines and on railroads, men are holding important positions and receiving splendid salaries—because they clipped this coupon.

Clerks have become sales, advertising and business managers, mechanics have become foremen, superintendents and engineers, carpenters have become architects and contractors, men and boys have risen from nothing at all to places of responsibility—because they clipped this coupon.

You have seen it in almost every magazine you have looked at for years. And while you have been passing it by more than ten thousand men and women each month have been making it the first stepping stone to real success in life.

Will you still turn away from opportunity? Can you still go on, putting in your days at the same grind, getting the same pay envelope with the same insufficient sum, trying to keep up the constant fight against a soaring cost of living, when such a little thing can be the means of changing your whole life?

You *can* have the position you want in the work you like best, a salary that will give you and your family the home, the comforts, the little luxuries you would like them to have. No matter what your age, your occupation, your education, or your means—you can do it!

All we ask is the chance to prove it. That's fair, isn't it? Then mark and mail this coupon. There's no obligation and not a penny of cost. It's a little thing that takes but a moment, but it's the most important thing you can do today. Do it now!

TEAR OUT HERE  
**INTERNATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE SCHOOLS**  
BOX 2151-B, SCRANTON, PA.

Explain, without obligating me, how I can qualify for the position, or in the subject, before which I mark X.

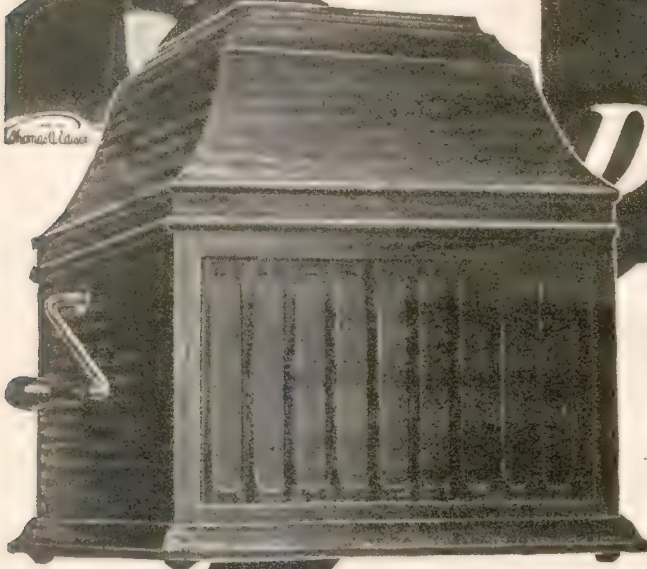
- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> ELECTRICAL ENGINEER            | <input type="checkbox"/> SALESMANSHIP            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electric Lighting and Railways | <input type="checkbox"/> ADVERTISING             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Electric Wiring                | <input type="checkbox"/> Window Trimmer          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Telegraph Engineer             | <input type="checkbox"/> Show Card Writer        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone Work                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Sign Painter            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MECHANICAL ENGINEER            | <input type="checkbox"/> Railroad Trainman       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mechanical Draftsman           | <input type="checkbox"/> ILLUSTRATING            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Machine Shop Practice          | <input type="checkbox"/> Cartooning              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Toolmaker                      | <input type="checkbox"/> BUSINESS MANAGEMENT     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gas Engine Operating           | <input type="checkbox"/> Private Secretary       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CIVIL ENGINEER                 | <input type="checkbox"/> BOOKKEEPER              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Surveying and Mapping          | <input type="checkbox"/> Stenographer and Typist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> MINE FOREMAN OR ENGINEER       | <input type="checkbox"/> Cert. Public Accountant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> STATIONARY ENGINEER            | <input type="checkbox"/> TRAFFIC MANAGER         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marine Engineer                | <input type="checkbox"/> Railway Accountant      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ship Draftsman                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial Law          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECT                      | <input type="checkbox"/> GOOD ENGLISH            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contractor and Builder         | <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architectural Draftsman        | <input type="checkbox"/> Common School Subjects  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concrete Builder               | <input type="checkbox"/> CIVIL SERVICE           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Structural Engineer            | <input type="checkbox"/> Railway Mail Clerk      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PLUMBING AND HEATING           | <input type="checkbox"/> AUTOMOBILE OPERATING    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sheet Metal Worker             | <input type="checkbox"/> Auto Repairing          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Textile Overseer or Supt.      | <input type="checkbox"/> Navigation              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CHEMIST                        | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Poultry Raising         |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish                 |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> French                  |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> Italian                 |

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Present \_\_\_\_\_  
Occupation \_\_\_\_\_  
Street \_\_\_\_\_  
and No. \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_

Canadians may send this coupon to  
International Correspondence Schools, Montreal, Canada



*Mr. Edison's  
Wonderful New  
Amberola*



**Only  
\$1.00  
Down**

Yes,  
we will  
send you  
the New Edison  
Amberola, the

product of the world's greatest inventor's genius, the phonograph with the wonderful diamond stylus reproducer and your choice of the latest Diamond Amberol Records on trial. Pay only \$1.00 down. *Seize this opportunity. Send the coupon NOW.*

**Rock-Bottom  
Offer Direct!**

If, after this trial, you decide to keep Mr. Edison's superb new instrument, pay the balance on the easiest kind of monthly payments. Think of it—a \$1.00 payment, and a few dollars a month to get this wonderful new style outfit—Mr. Edison's great phonograph with the diamond stylus reproducer, all the musical results of the highest price outfits—yes, the greatest value for \$1.00 down, balance on easiest monthly terms. Convince yourself—Hear it first.

**New Edison Amberola in Your Home on FREE Trial!**

Entertain your family and friends with the latest song hits, with your favorite old-time melodies — with everything from grand opera to comic vaudeville. Roar with laughter at the side-splitting minstrel shows. Then, after the trial, send it back at our expense if you choose. Or keep it on our great, rock-bottom offer. *Send the coupon now.*

**To F. K. BABSON, Edison Phonograph Distributors  
1451 Edison Block, Chicago, Illinois**

Gentlemen: Please send me your New Edison Catalog and full particulars of your trial offer on the new model Edison Amberola.

Name .....

Address .....

**New Edison Catalog  
FREE**

Your name and address on a postal or a letter (or just the coupon) is enough. No obligation in asking for catalog. Find out about Mr. Edison's great new phonograph. Get the details of this offer—*while this offer lasts*. Write today—now.

**F. K. BABSON, Edison Phonograph Distributors  
1451 Edison Block, Chicago, Illinois  
Canadian Office: 338 Portage Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba**





## Hires For the Nation's Homes

**H**IRES, a fountain favorite, is now everywhere available in bottled form also. Hires in bottles for the home is the same good drink that you have found it at soda fountains.

*Nothing goes into Hires but the pure healthful juices of roots, barks, herbs, berries—and pure cane sugar. The quality of Hires is maintained in spite of tremendously increased costs of ingredients. Yet you pay no more for Hires than you do for an artificial imitation.*

But be sure you ask your dealer for "Hires" just as you say "Hires" at a soda fountain.

THE CHARLES E. HIRES COMPANY, PHILADELPHIA

*Hires contains juices of 16 roots, barks, herbs and berries*

# Hires *in bottles*





# The Brunswick Method of Reproduction



## New musical standards set by Brunswick

Our great ambition has been fulfilled! And that was to bring something superior, something different into phonographic music.

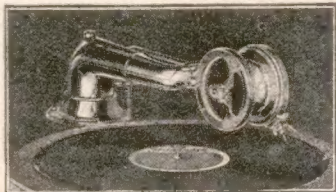
In nearly a half-million homes Brunswick Phonographs have brought new delights, finer appreciations.

First, because Brunswick accomplished something better in tone by introducing an improved amplifier. We brought out an all-wood, non-metal sound chamber which conforms to acoustic laws. This enabled tone waves to expand properly, and ended harshness.

Then came the Ultona, an all-record reproducer. It did away with makeshift attachments.

At a turn of the hand, the Ultona presents to each make of record the proper needle, the proper diaphragm. Thus each type of record is heard at its best.

Of course we brought superior cabinet work, for the House of Brunswick has been famous for 76 years for its wood-crafting. And we brought a complete instrument, not an assembled one.



*The Ultona plays all records*

Thus we accomplished a distinct advancement in phonographic music. And the verdict of approval has been universal. And it was approved by comparison. We ask people to judge for themselves.

Now we offer Brunswick Records, as advanced in their field as our phonograph was in its.

Again we ask you to pass judgment. Hear Brunswick Records. Compare them. Decide for yourself that they offer superiorities.

A Brunswick dealer will be delighted to play The Brunswick for you, so as to make any test. And also Brunswick Records. Remember Brunswick Records can be played on any phonograph with steel or fibre needle.

**THE BRUNSWICK-BALKE-COLLENDER COMPANY**

General Offices: 623-633 S. Wabash Ave., Chicago

Branch Houses in Principal Cities of  
United States, Mexico and Canada

Canadian Distributors: Musical Merchandise  
Sales Co., 819 Yonge St., Toronto

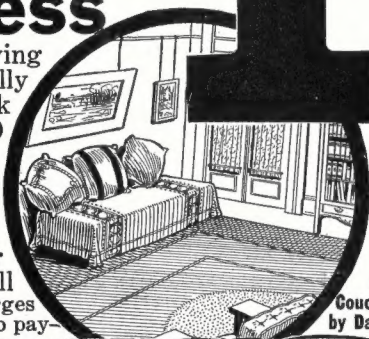
**Brunswick**  
PHONOGRAPHS AND RECORDS



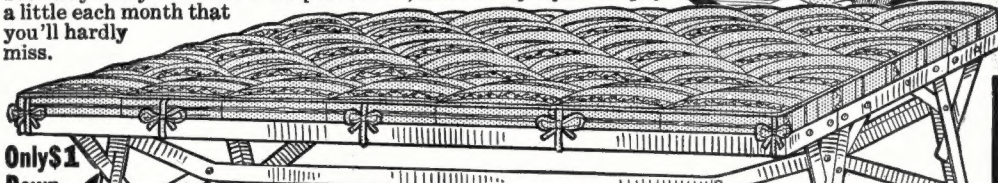
# Send Only \$1

## for This High Grade Sanitary Couch and Mattress

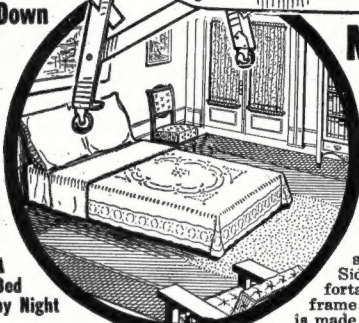
Only by seeing this outfit in your home and enjoying its supreme comfort and usefulness can you fully appreciate its truly wonderful value at our rock bottom price. One dollar brings it to you for 30 days' trial in your home—at our risk. If, after 30 days, you are not satisfied that it is the greatest bargain you have seen; if you are not delighted with its extreme usefulness and value in your home; if you are not thoroughly satisfied to keep it at our low money-saving price—return it to us and we will not only refund your dollar, but will pay transportation charges both ways. If you decide to keep the outfit, take nearly a year to pay—a little each month that you'll hardly miss.



A Couch by Day



Only \$1 Down



A Bed by Night

### Make Your Living Room Produce a Revenue

This unusual outfit—a comfortable, good looking couch by day and a restful, full size bed by night—will make it possible for you to derive a real revenue from your living room.

Outfit consists of guaranteed Simmons Sanitary Couch and well filled Mattress. Sanitary Couch is made throughout of heavy angle steel, has Simmons' Patented Galvanized Twisted Link, rust-proof fabric attached to end angles by strong, flexible, helical springs. Width of seat when closed as Couch, 22 inches.

Sides raise easily and lock automatically, forming comfortable Bed with a sleeping surface of 43½ inches wide by 74 inches long. Entire frame splendidly finished with several coats best quality Gray Enamel. Mattress is made to comply with all bedding laws of various States and is covered with an attractive flowered Art Ticking in serviceable colors and is well filled with splendid quality cotton linters. Pad weighs about 15 pounds. Complete weight of outfit, about 75 pounds.

Order by No. 207BMA8. Price, \$13.85. Pay \$1 down. Balance, \$1.50 monthly.

### Nearly A YEAR TO PAY

Send only \$1 for this remarkable money-saving value at once. Examine all its superior features. Show it to your friends. Remember, we take the risk. If you keep it, you have nearly a year to pay balance of our bargain price.

## FREE BARGAIN CATALOG

Thousands of bargains in furniture, rugs, curtains, stoves, ranges, dishes, silverware, jewelry, phonographs, clocks, washing machines, baby carriages, gas engines, sewing machines, kitchenware, cream separators, general farm equipment, etc.—all on our easy payment plan. Send coupon or postal for your free copy today.



## HARTMAN FURNITURE & CARPET CO.

3913 Wentworth Ave. Dept. 2685 Chicago, Ill.

Enclosed find \$1. Send the Sanitary Couch and Mattress No. 207BMA8 as described. I am to have 30 days' trial. If not satisfied, will ship it back and you will refund my \$1 and pay freight both ways. If I keep it, I will pay \$1.50 per month until the price, \$13.85, is paid.

☐ Send FREE Hartman Bargain Book.

## HARTMAN FURNITURE & CARPET COMPANY

3913 Wentworth Ave., Dept. 2685, Chicago

Name.....  
Address.....  
City..... State.....



# Columbia Grafonola

## "Now we can dance"

In thousands of pleasant places this scene is repeated every year, with this Vacation Model equipped with the exclusive Columbia Non-Set Automatic Stop, which operates on any record, long or short. Nothing to move or set or measure. Just put on your record and the Grafonola plays and stops itself.

Sweet and clear of tone, light, compact, and easily carried, this wonderful little Grafonola is a never-failing entertainer for vacation days.

*Columbia Grafonolas: Standard Models  
up to \$300. Period Designs up to \$2100.*

COLUMBIA GRAPHOPHONE COMPANY, New York  
Canadian Factory: Toronto

